SPECIAL ISSUE

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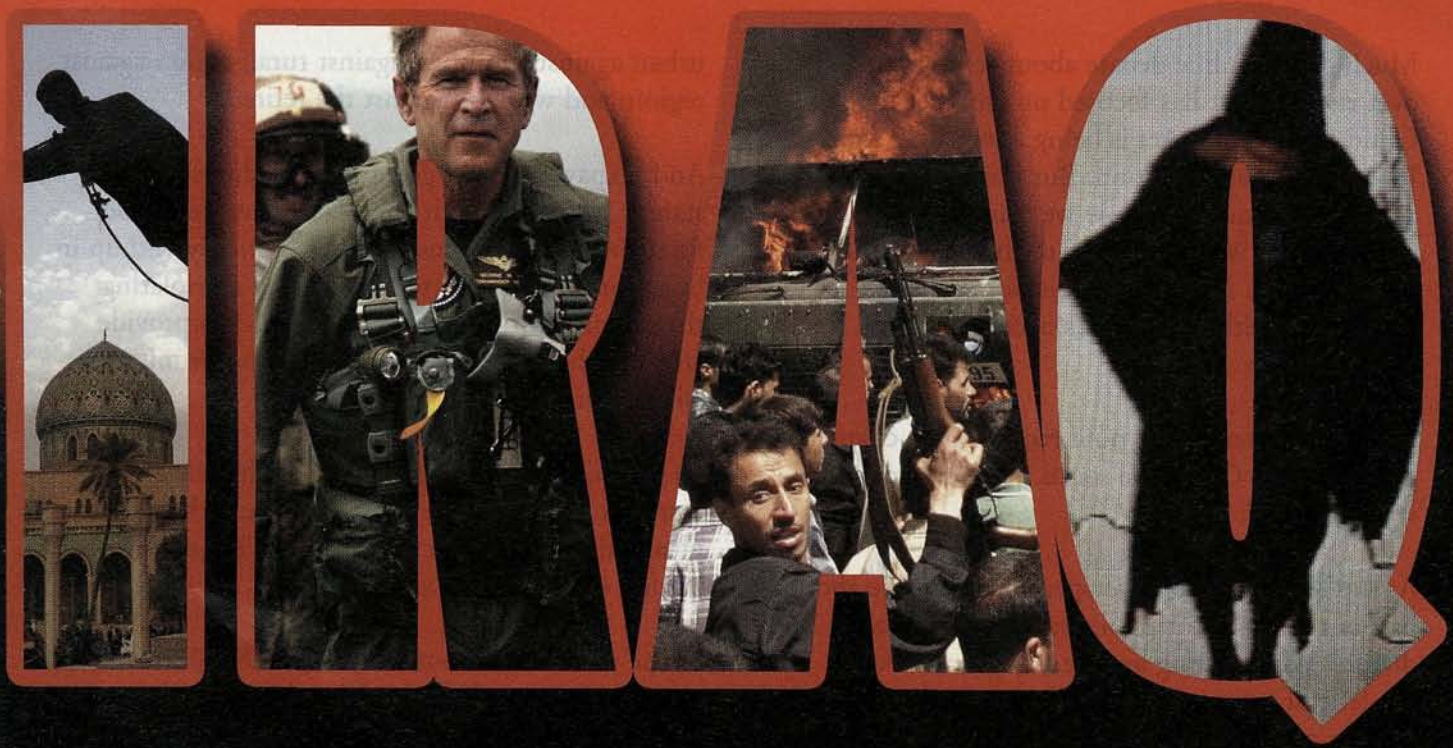

WERE WE WRONG?

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No More Talking Around *the* School-Financing Issue

Kurt M. Landgraf,
President & CEO, ETS

Much of the public debate about school financing over the last year has focused on whether the No Child Left Behind Act is being adequately funded. It's an important question. But if our goal is fairness as well as adequacy in how we fund our public schools, then we need to get to the core of the funding issue. And that means doing away, once and for all, with the system's over-reliance on local property taxes.

For many states, that would require a sea change in public policy. Given the status quo, an overhaul is what's needed.

At the K-12 level, on average, states provide about half of the funds for public schools, with local districts contributing another 43 percent, and the federal government making up the balance. Within a district, most of a community's contributions to the school budget are drawn from local property taxes.

As a rule, the wealthier the community, the higher the property values and the more money available for students, schools and school improvement. It's a self-propelling cycle driven by a regressive tax.

It's also a social flash point that's harming education and eroding confidence in public institutions. By tying school funding so closely to local wealth, we're pitting rich against middle class against poor; urban against suburban against rural; region against region; and workers against the retired.

And taxpayer against government: Almost every state is struggling with complaints over its school-financing system. These disputes typically end up in litigation in which states are accused of violating their own constitutional requirements to provide effective, high-quality educational opportunities for all of their students.

As a result, we have a patchwork of hopelessly complex public policies that few would defend as ideal, fair or even effective in providing access to a quality education for all students.

In the weeks and months ahead, ETS will be stepping up our efforts to drive this issue closer to center stage in the public policy arena. Some have cautioned us not to do so, arguing that school financing is either too complex to examine or too politically charged to confront. In fact, it's too important an issue not to confront.

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CORRESPONDENCE

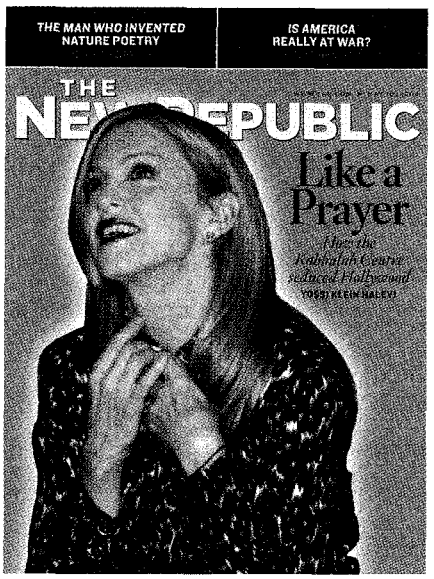
SANITY DEFENSE

I WAS SADDENED BY THE SLANT YOU took in your article about the Kabbalah Centre ("Like a Prayer," May 10). I am something of a devotee, but I like to believe that I am inner-directed; maintain my intellectual honesty, independence, and integrity; and am not a glassy-eyed cult follower, as you imply in your piece. I am not a paid employee or even a volunteer but have been studying there for over a year. Your piece implies shallowness and a hidden agenda behind the Kabbalah Centre's strategy, suggesting a sinister intent. But only Yossi Klein Halevi's doubts, misperceptions, or preconceptions could, in my mind, cause him to "miss it," as you allege of such apparently intelligent, sophisticated, sane people like Mick Jagger.

RON FISH
Deerfield Beach, Florida

SOOTHING CHOICE

I ENJOYED SARAH WILDMAN'S ASTUTE observations on the recent pro-choice rally ("New Choice," May 10). I saw 85 of my classmates board buses at Northwestern University to join the protesters in Washington, D.C., and Wildman's article gave me a new perspective on the pro-choice movement. In March, the Pro-Life Action League demonstrated on campus by holding up five-foot-tall pictures of aborted fetuses. They even held banners that compared abortion to the Holocaust, and the demonstrators referred to pro-choice supporters as "pro-abortion." Women's rights groups on campus responded by holding up signs that read, GET OFF MY CAMPUS, GET OUT OF MY UTERUS and NOT THE CHURCH, NOT THE STATE, ONLY WOMEN SHOULD DECIDE THEIR FATE. The contrast between how the groups viewed themselves didn't become as apparent until I read Wildman's article: The pro-lifers focused on the debate about death, while the pro-choice supporters saw themselves as defenders of women's rights. And the debate extended beyond just abortion—it was a debate over democracy. In order to survive, the pro-choice movement must evolve, and the movement is adapting well. A diverse group of demonstrators supporting a broader agenda will have a louder voice


THE MAN WHO INVENTED NATURE POETRY
IS AMERICA REALLY AT WAR?
THE NEW REPUBLIC
Like a Prayer
How the Kabbalah Centre Seduced Hollywood
YOSSI KLEIN HALEVI

than a narrow group of middle-class, white women. I will finally enter the real world soon (I will graduate from college), and I would hate to live in a country where my basic rights are restricted, which is what will happen if *Roe* v. *Wade* is overturned; it is crucial for the pro-choice movement to show its full strength.

NANCY HO
Evanston, Illinois

SERVICE INTERRUPTION

I HAVE WITNESSED THE ALIENATION highlighted by Peter Beinart in his searching essay on elite attitudes toward military service ("Two Countries," May 10). At the University of California at Berkeley, in 1999, I was one of the few law students—out of more than 500 eligible—to participate in informational interviews with Judge Advocate General's Corps (JAG) representatives from the various services. (Others signed up for interview slots, but only to protest the military's presence at Berkeley.) In the end, I did not join JAG. But the question that Beinart dreads—What did *you* do?—has weighed heavily on me these past two and a half years. I was surprised to learn that 31 years old is still young enough to enter service—particularly under current circumstances. (One of my brothers recently joined the National Guard at age 36.) This fall, I will enroll in the Army Officer Candidate School. I hope to be assigned to the military intelligence branch. Elite young persons will not begin to correct the "ugly—and growing—class skew" in the volunteer military until they have been inculcated with the conception of citizenship to which Beinart alludes, whereby service is accepted as "a phase interspersed with civilian life" rather than an alternative life chosen by "other Americans."

JOHN B. RENEHAN
New York, New York

KERRY BOUND

JOHN KERRY WAS ON THE MARK when he criticized Israel's security "fence" as a barrier to peace and described the hardships it imposes on ordinary Palestinians ("Hebrew Lessons," May 10). And he was on the mark when he stated that he would like to send Jimmy Carter as one of the special envoys to Israel to mediate. Kerry has, unfortunately, fallen into the trap that all candidates, Democratic and Republican, encounter when seeking office: They need the support of the organizations mentioned in the article that are part of the powerful pro-Israel lobby in the United States. After meeting with Jewish groups, Kerry no longer discusses using Carter or the United Nations in the peace process, and vows to veto any U.N. resolutions criticizing Israel (even legitimate ones regarding their continued occupation, targeted assassinations, detentions, destruction of homes, and policy of collective punishment). He praised the security "fence" as merely a response by Israel. Kerry, therefore, will not deal as an unbiased broker in the conflict.

BRADFORD FURMAN
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Partisan Review

TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

IN THE RUN-UP TO THE IRAQ WAR, I tried hard not to be partisan. I distrusted the Bush administration and feared it would be politically empowered by the war. But such thoughts felt petty and limited at such an important time. And so I evaluated the arguments for war on their merits, irrespective of my feelings about the people making them. Doing so made me feel superior to the Democrats, who, I suspected, would have supported an Iraq war waged by Al Gore, and to the Republicans, who had opposed the Kosovo war because it was waged by Bill Clinton.

But, in retrospect, my efforts not to be limited proved limiting. Partisanship, it turned out, was an extremely useful analytical tool in understanding the Iraq war. Had I not tried so hard to cleanse myself of it, I might have seen some of the war's problems earlier than I did.

This was a partisan war. By partisan, I don't mean that it was led by Republicans. It was partisan in the sense that the people who formulated it prized group loyalty above all else. They divided the world, the country, and even their own administration into people who could be trusted and people who could not. And, unfortunately, the people who could be trusted knew much less about how to build democracy in Iraq than the people who could not.

In its broadest sense, the partisanship pitted America against those countries skeptical of war. The governments of France, Russia, and Germany made various arguments against invading Iraq. Sometimes they even suggested that Europe's colonial history provided them with valuable insights into the difficulties of occupying an Arab country. President Jacques Chirac twice told President George W. Bush that France's experience in Algeria should serve as a cautionary tale. But the striking thing about the pro-war camp in Washington was how little it engaged with foreign governments' arguments, let alone experiences, and how much it focused on their motives. Conservatives mocked the conspiracy-minded left for suggesting the Bush administration was going to war for oil. But they simply took it for granted that France and Russia opposed the war to preserve their contracts with Saddam. In the days before the invasion, conservatives speculated gleefully about the Iraqi documents American soldiers were sure to find proving that Chirac had been personally corrupted by Saddam. Who needed to ponder seriously the objections of a man like that?

The second group that could not be trusted was American liberals. Since the press was permeated by left-wing bias, reporting that undermined the case for war was naturally suspect. As *Washington Times* reporter Bill Sammon writes in his book, *Misunderestimated*, "Bush thinks that immersing himself in voluminous, mostly liberal-leaning news coverage might cloud his thinking." Since most academics who studied the Arab world were self-evidently anti-American, conservatives trusted only one prominent historian of the Middle East: Bernard Lewis. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) also had hidden agendas. In the 1990s, America's NGOs had amassed considerable experience in postwar reconstruction. But that experience had come from Bill Clinton's "social work" wars: Bosnia, Kosovo, Haiti, East Timor—wars the Bushies had ridiculed. And, thus, these examples were rarely cited or examined. It was as if the only countries America had ever occupied were Germany, Japan, and perhaps South Korea.

In his *Atlantic Monthly* article "Blind into Baghdad," James Fallows notes that the NGOs requested a meeting with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld or his deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, in January to discuss postwar planning. They never got one. And, after the war, as Joshua Marshall, Laura Rozen, and Colin Soloway have detailed in *The Washington Monthly*, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) didn't hire veterans of the reconstruction efforts of the '90s; it hired conservative lobbyists and Hill staffers. As journalists in Baghdad joked about CPA headquarters, "They don't call it the Republican Palace for nothing."

Finally, there were the enemies within the administration itself. As Fallows notes, the State Department, CIA, and military did a great deal of prewar planning, much of it prescient. But all three institutions were deemed antiwar, and that mattered more than their insights. As former White House speechwriter David Frum has written, "[T]he CIA's warnings on Iraq matters had lost some of their credibility in the 1990s. The agency was regarded by many in the Bush administration as reflexively and implacably hostile to any activist policy in Iraq." When Defense Department employees participated in a CIA simulation of postwar Iraq, they were reprimanded by top Pentagon officials. And, when Jay Garner, Iraq's first post-Saddam administrator, hired Thomas Warrick, who had led the State Department's prewar planning effort, he was forced by Rumsfeld to fire him. After Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz rebuked General Eric Shinseki, who had led U.S. peacekeeping efforts in Bosnia, for saying Iraq would require "several hundred thousand" troops, *The Weekly Standard* wrote an article on the topic. Determining how many troops it would take to occupy Iraq was an "important question," the article acknowledged. But, it added, "most of the people who ask this question are isolationists trying to make the case against war."

In the fall of 2002, I worried about the administration's aversion to nation-building. But I assumed that, because postwar Iraq—unlike Afghanistan—was crucial to the president's reelection, his administration would listen to the people who understood postwar reconstruction best. What I didn't realize was that, for top Bush officials and their conservative allies, there were no "best practices" that spanned administrations, parties, or nations. There was just their way and their opponents' way. And, if their way placed ideology above expertise, that was fine, because, despite all its denials, the other side did, too.

For conservatives, the right lesson of Iraq is that, if you apply a loyalty test to this country's best sources of knowledge—the academy, the press, and the government itself—you'll lose the war on terrorism through sheer ignorance. For liberals, the lesson is to see conservatives as they are, not as you'd like them to be. I'll try to remember it next time.

PETER BEINART

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Were We Wrong?

THIS MAGAZINE SUPPORTED the Iraq war for two reasons, one primarily strategic, one primarily moral. The strategic reason was simple: We considered war the only way to ensure that Saddam Hussein never acquired a nuclear weapon. The Bush administration spoke about "weapons of mass destruction"—lumping biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons together and making the former appear more menacing by their association with the latter.

But we believed Iraqi chemical and biological weapons constituted a threat only if transferred to Al Qaeda—a scenario for which there was no evidence. An Iraqi bomb, by contrast, would by its mere existence transform the Middle Eastern balance of power, vaulting Saddam toward his long-standing goal of regional domination. To assume a nuclear-tipped Iraq could be deterred—given Saddam's history of reckless miscalculation and mass murder—struck us as naïve.

Many opponents of the war also considered a nuclear Iraq intolerable. But they believed that containment—the system of inspections, sanctions, and no-fly zones upon which the world had relied since 1991—could prevent such an outcome. We were less sanguine. The further the Gulf war receded into memory, the harder America's European and Middle Eastern allies pushed to weaken—and ultimately end—the sanctions regime. Inspections, already undermined by repeated Iraqi obstruction, collapsed altogether in 1998. Under U.S. pressure, the Security Council reversed this trend in late 2002 and demanded intrusive, unimpeded inspections. But we worried that, when President Bush's threats of war passed, so would the world's vigilance. And, when France, Russia, and China responded to Saddam's refusal to comply fully with the new inspections by proposing extensions, rather than the "serious consequences" promised in U.N. Resolution 1441, we felt our pessimism vindicated. The world's long-term will to deny Saddam a nuclear weapon seemed weak. Saddam's hunger to acquire one seemed self-evident.

Today, it no longer seems so self-evident. More than a year after the fall of Baghdad, the United States has found no evidence of an active Iraqi nuclear program. Iraq's nuclear scientists say there was none. The central assumption underlying this magazine's strategic rationale for war now appears to have been wrong.

Perhaps Saddam was merely biding his time, waiting for sanctions to be lifted before resuming his nuclear efforts in earnest. Given his history, that strikes us as a plausible interpretation of events. Which is why, even knowing what we know now, Saddam may still have been a threat.

But saying he was a threat does not mean he was a threat urgent enough to require war. We lack John Kerry's confidence that waiting to confront Iraq would have produced a broader coalition for attack. France, Russia, and China would likely always have feared a U.S. beachhead in the Arab world more than they feared Saddam. But waiting to confront Iraq would have allowed the United States to confront more immediate dangers. In late 2002, Al Qaeda was regrouping in southern Afghanistan and launching a campaign to destabilize not only the government in Kabul, but also the nuclear-armed government in Islamabad. In Iran, evidence was mounting that a regime with far closer terrorist ties than Saddam's, really was trying to build a nuclear bomb. In North Korea, a regime with a record of trading nuclear secrets, was building several.

Resources are finite. To defeat and occupy Iraq, the United States has transferred special operations units from the hunt for Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. Because our military is stretched so thin in Iraq, we cannot threaten military action in Iran or North Korea, which has reduced our diplomatic leverage. The tradeoffs even extend to the nonmilitary sphere. The Bush administration's refusal to adequately fund security for U.S. chemical and nuclear plants, for inspections at our ports, and for the police officers and firemen who would be the first to respond to a terrorist attack is well-documented. Absent its enormous expenditures in Iraq, the administration could have far better addressed these threats—threats more urgent than a tyrant in Baghdad with nuclear dreams, but no nuclear plans.

Should we have known that the key assumption underlying our strategic rationale for war would prove false? By early 2003, it was becoming clear that at least two pieces of evidence the administration cited as proof of Saddam's nuclear program—his supposed purchase of uranium from Niger and his acquisition of aluminum tubes for a supposed nuclear centrifuge—were highly dubious. By mid-February, Mohammed ElBaradei, director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), announced that his agency's inspectors had "found no evidence of ongoing prohibited nuclear or nuclear-related activities in Iraq."

In retrospect, we should have paid more attention to these warning signs. But, at the time, there seemed good reason not to. After all, Saddam had tried desperately to build a bomb before the

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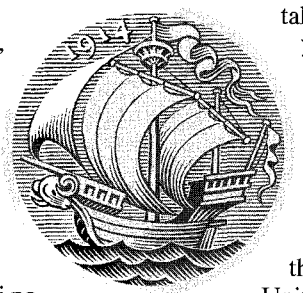
first Gulf war. While there was no proof he had revived this nuclear program in the '90s, he acted like a guilty man—relentlessly impeding inspections, even though such behavior perpetuated the sanctions that ravaged his people and made him an international pariah. Even after he allowed IAEA inspectors to return in late 2002, he denied them unfettered access to Iraqi nuclear scientists—although, by then, the cost of noncompliance was more than just continued sanctions; it was war. And, beyond Saddam's past history and current behavior, there were the claims of American—and foreign—intelligence. In October 2002, the National Intelligence Estimate, the combined assessment of America's various intelligence agencies, stated that "all intelligence experts agree that Iraq is seeking nuclear weapons." We know now that some experts didn't agree, but few outside the administration thought so at the time. Indeed, even most opponents of the war assumed Iraq was trying to build a bomb. We feel regret—but no shame.

BUT, IF OUR STRATEGIC RATIONALE for war has collapsed, our moral one has not. In the '90s, this magazine supported military intervention to prevent slaughter in Bosnia, Kosovo, and (unsuccessfully) Rwanda. And, in the process, we learned that stopping genocide brings unexpected rewards. Because the United States went to war twice in the Balkans, southeastern Europe is now largely at peace, increasingly democratic, and slowly integrating into Europe. By contrast, in Rwanda, where the United States stood by, genocide's aftershocks have helped plunge much of Central Africa into war, killing millions and destabilizing an entire region.

By 2003, of course, Iraq was no longer the scene of genocide. But it remained among the ghastliest regimes of our time, a moral cancer at the center of a region whose pathologies were threatening the world. In the Balkans, as well as in East Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America, we had seen that decency in one country often begets decency in its neighbors. At some point in the '80s or '90s, each region had reached a political tipping point. And, while we did not think the overthrow of Saddam could, by itself, produce one in the Middle East, we hoped it would shift the balance—showing the Arab world's besieged liberals that the forces of ignorance, fanaticism, and bigotry were no longer on the march.

In the year since Saddam's statue fell, those hopes have suffered some devastating setbacks. Iraqis, who we hoped (and still hope) will become a model for their region, have proved more susceptible to its pathologies than we expected. Fanatical Islam, America-hatred, and a penchant for conspiracy theories—all forces we hoped a free Iraq would undermine—have instead undermined our efforts to build liberal institutions. And, in our inability to provide democracy's fundamental prerequisite—security—we have undermined and delegitimized ourselves.

As a result, this war's moral costs have been higher than we foresaw. The deaths of any Americans, and any innocent Iraqis, would have been painful. But, because Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and President Bush refused to listen to their generals and send enough troops, hundreds of Americans and thousands of Iraqis have died needlessly. Because Rumsfeld, Bush, and Attorney General John Ashcroft winked at torture, it will take years for America to regain the moral credibility it needs to effectively champion human rights. And, just as incompetence in Somalia led to inaction in Rwanda, the Iraq war could—in a terrible irony—turn Americans against intervention the next time innocents are slaughtered.



With all these tragedies, how can there still be a moral case for the war in Iraq? Because Iraqis today—no matter how scared and how bitter—are, in some meaningful sense, free. From the hundreds of Iraqi newspapers to the roughly 40 new Iraqi political parties to the local councils being elected across the country, Iraqis are developing the independent civil society and open politics that the Middle East desperately needs. Could this embryonic freedom be extinguished? Of course. Given the militias roaming the country, Iraq's political future could well be decided by guns rather than ballots. If another dictator murders his way to power, or the country dissolves into violent fiefdoms, the war will have proved not just a strategic failure, but a moral one as well.

But that is clearly not what Iraqis want. Polls show that most Iraqis desire a democracy with Islamic characteristics and think they will achieve one. Prominent Iraqis like Ayatollah Ali Al Sistani don't denounce the United States for bringing too much democracy, but for not bringing it quickly enough.

And, throughout the Arab and Muslim world, people are watching. They may not hate America any less than they did before the war—for the time being, they may even hate it more. But, with the fall of Iraq's dictator, they can finally envision the fall of their own. And the new discourse emerging in Iraq is reverberating across its borders, changing what is conceivable. In March, demonstrators gathered outside the parliament building in Damascus, demanding an end to the country's longstanding state of emergency. A few days later, Kurds rioted in the country's northeast, prompting eleven Syrian human rights groups to blame the unrest on "the absence of democratic life and public freedoms." That same month, a group of prominent Arab intellectuals and activists met in Alexandria, Egypt, where they issued what famed Egyptian dissident Saad Eddin Ibrahim called "a sort of Arab Magna Carta" demanding reform. "In the Middle East today, you talk about food, you talk about football—and you talk about democracy," a young Egyptian political scientist named Mohammed Kamal recently told *Washington Post* columnist Jackson Diehl. "There is a serious debate going on in the Arab world about their own societies. The United States has triggered this debate."

The outcome of that debate is in Arab hands, not American ones. Even in Iraq, although we must still assist as best we can, our control is slipping away. Ultimately, it is this new, bewildering, liberating debate, rather than U.S. force of arms, upon which our hopes for Iraq, and the whole Arab world, now rest. Americans no longer have the power to redeem this war. But Iraqis still can. ■

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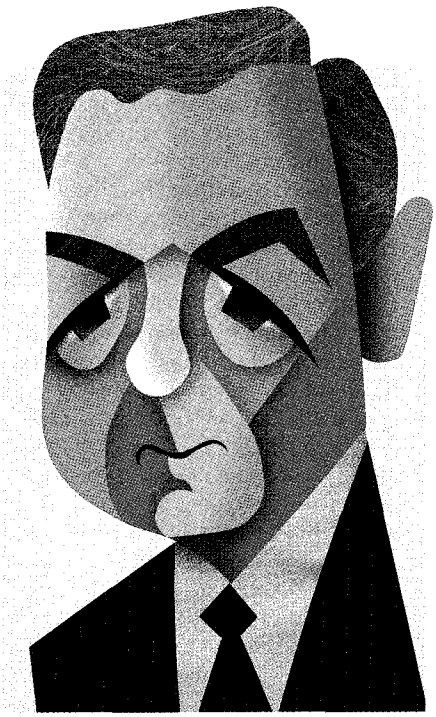
NOTEBOOK

JOHN ASHCROFT, RIGHT ON TIME . . . BILL FRIST: NO BUDGET? THAT'S FINE!

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

CALL US CYNICAL, BUT WHENEVER Attorney General John Ashcroft makes a dramatic announcement relating to the war on terrorism, we start looking for ulterior motives. After all, who can forget how, in June 2002, just four days after FBI whistleblower Coleen Rowley gave devastating congressional testimony about the bureau's pre–September 11 lapses, Ashcroft went on television—from Moscow, no less—to reveal the capture of the alleged dirty bomber Jose Padilla, who had already been in custody for nearly a month, thereby knocking Rowley out of the news cycle? Or how, earlier this year, when asked by the 9/11 Commission about why, prior to September 11, he had not taken the threat of terrorism more seriously, the attorney general declassified a 1995 memo so that, in his testimony, he could blame its author (former Deputy Attorney General and 9/11 Commissioner Jamie Gorelick) for the Justice Department's inattention to the issue?

So this week, when Ashcroft announced the indictment of a Somali citizen living in Columbus, Ohio, who, Ashcroft charged, worked with Al Qaeda and was conspiring to blow up a local shopping mall, we wondered about the timing—especially seeing as how the man had been indicted the previous Thursday. Could it have had anything to do with the fact that, the night before Ashcroft's announcement, *The Washington Post* had released a copy of an August 2002 Justice Department memo on the use of torture—a memo Ashcroft had stubbornly (and perhaps illegally) refused to turn over to the Senate Judiciary Committee? Or did Ashcroft's timing have to do with the fact that, the afternoon after his announcement, John Kerry was scheduled to make a campaign swing through Columbus—a visit that was knocked off the local news by the revelation that the sleepy state capital had apparently been in Al Qaeda's crosshairs? "The American heartland was targeted for death and destruction by an Al Qaeda cell," Ashcroft declared, although law enforcement officials subsequently said the plot didn't appear to have advanced beyond the discussion stage. How odd Ashcroft didn't see fit to mention that.



John Ashcroft

LEADERSHIP SKILLS

BACK IN 2002, WHEN DEMOCRATS controlled the Senate, Republicans loved nothing more than to pound Majority Leader Tom Daschle for his failure to pass an annual budget resolution. Due by April 15 each year, budget resolutions set spending limits for the appropriation bills hashed out later in the year. When Daschle, holding a tiny partisan advantage, failed to build a majority for a resolution two years ago, Republicans pounced. "For the first time since 1974 the Senate has failed to pass a budget resolution. This is embarrassing and a bit disgraceful," moaned Kentucky Republican Jim Bunning in June 2002. An October memo on the "Dismal Daschle Senate" from the Senate Republican Policy Committee cited the missing resolution among "the litany of failures on Daschle's doorstep." Daschle's then–GOP counterpart, Trent Lott, summed up the argument this way: "Passing a budget is the most fundamental task of a legislative majority. Show me something which more clearly defines that you are in control, that you are leading, that you are governing than making the hard choices and building the coalitions, and rallying support for your budget plan."

Well, guess what? Republicans are back in control of the Senate and, two months after this year's budget resolution was due, they still haven't passed one. Just as Daschle failed to corral moderate Democrats back in 2002, Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist has deadlocked with renegade Republicans—namely John McCain, Lincoln Chafee, Susan Collins, and Olympia Snowe—who are admirably refusing to support the proposed resolution's extension of Bush tax cuts without also including some way to pay for them through tax increases or spending cuts. At the moment, a deal looks unlikely, and Frist has started suggesting that a budget resolution isn't so important after all. "We can move appropriations without a budget," Frist assured reporters on June 1. "And, if we have no choice, if we cannot get a budget through, then we'll proceed with the appropriations, and we'll be able to complete the process." Fine. But why do we suspect that we won't be seeing a GOP memo on the "Dismal Frist Senate" anytime soon?

AND ON THE SEVENTH DAY. . .

"CONSERVATIVES CAN STILL LEARN from his example."

"He made us face up to present dangers."

"He was the father of the new

DAVID COWLES

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space age."

"We are living in his world."

"His leadership of the coalition made the difference."

"He led an intellectual revolution, too."

"He made principles easily accessible."

"He linked economic growth with strength overseas."

"He would have been the right man at any time."

—A sampling of article teasers from *National Review Online*'s remembrance of Ronald Reagan. One wonders why they didn't have an essay titled, "Put no other presidents before him."

IF BY 'LONG-ESTABLISHED' HE MEANS 'NO,' THEN MAYBE HE ISN'T LYING

"HE HAD LONG-ESTABLISHED TIES with Al Qaeda." —Vice President Dick Cheney, referring to Saddam Hussein during a speech in Orlando, Florida, on June 14, 2004

"Bin Laden is said to have requested space to establish training camps, as well as assistance procuring weapons, but Iraq never responded. There have been reports [of] contacts between Iraq and Al Qaeda ... but they do not appear to have resulted in a collaborative relationship. ... We have no credible evidence that Iraq and Al Qaeda cooperated on attacks against the United States."—The 9/11 Commission's Staff Statement No. 15, released on June 16, 2004

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

NOAM SCHEIBER'S MAY 31, 2004, article "Race Against History" incorrectly described Harold Washington as the only African American mayor of Chicago. In fact, Washington was the only African American ever *elected* mayor of Chicago. Washington died shortly after winning a second term, at which point Eugene Sawyer, a black Chicago alderman, was chosen by the city council. We regret the error. ■

TNR.commentary

Campaign Journal

RYAN LIZZA

THE STERN GANG: Forget about soccer moms and NASCAR dads. The New Democrat Network (NDN) has identified the hot new swing vote of the 2004 election: people who listen to Howard Stern. It turns out that Stern's anti-Bush diatribes might actually be having an impact on the presidential campaign. From a polling memo recently released by NDN:

> Potentially offsetting the conservative dominance of the radio waves is Howard Stern. The nationally-syndicated radio host is listened to by 17 percent of likely voters, and nationally, they would support Kerry over Bush by a margin of 53 percent to 43 percent. In the battleground states, their preference for Kerry is even stronger, backing him by a margin of 59 percent to 37 percent.
>
> More importantly, one-quarter of all likely voting Stern listeners are swing voters. *This means that four percent of likely voters this fall are swing voters who listen to Howard Stern, showing Stern's potential ability to impact the race.* [Emphasis added.]

Hmm. In 2000, Bush sat down for a soft interview with Oprah—remember that kiss?—to help close the huge gender gap that had opened up in the race. You have to wonder what will happen this year if Bush and Kerry decide to aggressively court the Stern Gang. No word yet on whether the Bush twins or Kerry's daughters have been asked to drop by Stern's radio lair.

DEAD PRESIDENT BOUNCE? Despite speculation to the contrary, it's doubtful former President Ronald Reagan's death will benefit President Bush. If anything, dead presidents seem to be a curse, rather than a blessing, for incumbents.

The last ex-president to die was Richard Nixon, on April 22, 1994, and Bill Clinton certainly didn't profit from any rally-around-the-leader effect. Clinton's approval rating was 51 percent that April, and it sunk the rest of the year until it hit 40 percent in December, the month after Clinton's party lost 52 House seats, eight Senate seats, and control of Congress.

Fine, you say, but that was Nixon. What about the last time a popular president passed away? Well, that didn't work out so well for the incumbent, either. On December 26, 1972, Harry Truman died. Less than a month later, on January 22, 1973, Lyndon Johnson died. A week later, President Nixon's approval rating hit a peak of 67 percent. LBJ's funeral turned out to be the absolute high point of Nixon's abbreviated second term. The following month, his approval rating began its downward, Watergate-fueled spiral, ending with his resignation in August 1974. If this history is a harbinger of things to come, we should expect Bush to lose in November.

But the real lesson is that isolated events like these rarely affect the broader political currents of an election year. There's no reason to believe that Reagan's death will have a lasting change on voters' opinions of Bush. If anything, the saturation coverage of Reagan crowded out positive news on the two subjects that will decide Bush's fate. The Bush campaign was planning on highlighting the recent spate of good economic news, and, at the United Nations, Bush won passage of a new resolution on Iraq. It would be better for Bush if the media were focused on his accomplishments rather than Reagan's.

IRAQ'D

SPENCER ACKERMAN

LOVE THY NEIGHBOR: *Newsweek* has obtained the first post–Abu Ghraib poll of Iraqi public opinion conducted by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). (Asked about the torturers, 54 percent of Iraqis polled agreed that "all Americans are like this," and 61 percent believed no one will be punished for the abuse.) The poll mostly excludes the Kurds—the farthest north pollsters traveled was Mosul—and, as a result, anti-American sentiment pervades.

The CPA and coalition forces enjoy the confidence of about one Iraqi in ten. That's a big drop from January, when the coalition had the confidence of about one in three Iraqis. As reflected by responses to other questions, it appears that 90 percent of Iraqis are consistently dissatisfied with us and that an equivalent percentage see our soldiers as occupiers. Only 41 percent want us out immediately—but another 45 percent want us gone when there's a permanent elected government.

Along with giving generally high marks to the Iraqi security institutions (above 60 percent confidence levels), the poll suggests that, while Iraqis hate us, they don't hate one another. That's not an inauspicious beginning for the interim government. The big question for Iraq now is whether the continued presence of American soldiers will taint the government or rally public support behind it. And that's a question the poll can't answer.

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Disillusion and its limits.

What Remains

BY LEON WIESELTIER

IF I HAD known that there are no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, I would not have supported this war. I am not embarrassed by my assumption that Saddam Hussein possessed the sort of arsenal that made him a clear and present danger: The alarming intelligence estimates were shared by many Western governments, so that the debate in the months preceding the war concerned the methods for disarming Iraq, not the reasons for disarming it. And to my certainty of Saddam's capability I added my certainty of his depravity. I required no intelligence estimates to demonstrate that Saddam stood out darkly in the discussion of weapons of mass destruction, because he had employed them, against soldiers and against civilians, and thereby demonstrated his immunity to the cold and saving rationality on which the art of deterrence has always been based. A man who could use these obscene materials was also a man who could proliferate them. And the political utility of the fear that such an arsenal could inspire in its region and elsewhere added to my conviction that Saddam Hussein constituted a severe menace. Owing to the scale of the catastrophe that such weapons may cause, moreover, they lead strategic calculations about proliferation to moral calculations about genocide. I saw no significant distinction between Halabja and Srebrenica: They were both human emergencies of the kind that justify, or so I believe, the use of American power against them. (The more precise analogy, of course, is between Halabja and Kigali, since in both instances America did nothing.) In the case of Saddam Hussein, then, the benefit of the doubt did not seem like an exercise in critical thinking. And so I was persuaded that the United States was facing a significant strategic threat and a significant humanitarian threat. Prudence and conscience brought me to the same conclusion.

But I was deceived. Strategic thinking must have an empirical foundation. You do not act against a threat for which there is little or no evidence. Yet that is precisely what the United States did. Saddam Hussein had no nuclear capability, and almost no nuclear program. If there is an adequate explanation for the disposition of his vast and documented hoard of chemical and biological weapons, I have not heard it; but the magnitude of the mystery surrounding his arsenal must not obscure the magnitude of the blunder that was committed in our description of it. Will some canisters or some vials still turn up in the desert? Perhaps, but I would not send a thousand American soldiers to their deaths for a debater's point. The arsenal that we said was there is not there. Whatever the merits of preemption, there was nothing to preempt. It really is as plain as that. An absence of regrets and recriminations on the part of a supporter of this war now amounts to an absence of intellectual honesty. The administration is reaping an alienation that it sowed. (It is very hard to forgive George W. Bush for the good fortune of Michael Moore.) Whether or not the president lied, he was not speaking the truth. He justified this war to the American people in a manner that will make it difficult for a long time to come to justify almost any war to the American people. In a time of genuine crisis, in a world riddled with savage enmity toward America and Americans, he was sloppy with our trust.

BUT THIS WAR had other grounds as well. It was supposed to strike a decisive blow against terrorism. I do not doubt the seriousness of the Bush administration's intention to protect the United States, but I never understood this argument. It always seemed to me that the benefits to American security that would result from preventing a collaboration between Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden (and I am under no illusion that the Baathism of the one or the Wahhabism of the other would stand in the way of their mutual anti-American convenience) would be substantially less than the costs to American security that would result from the introduction of an American army into the heart of the Arab world. We cannot fight Islamic radicalism, I mean militarily, without creating Islamic radicalism. The fight against Islamic radicalism must be political and cultural, which is why the fight against Islamic radicalism must not be conflated with the fight against Islamic terrorism. The latter must be more concrete and more immediate and more ruthless. But the victory over Al Qaeda will not be accomplished in Iraq. What does the formation of a government in Iraq have to do with the seven individuals whom the FBI is hunting in America? Indeed, the war in Iraq seems to have globalized Al Qaeda, and glamorized it in the eyes of many Muslims. In the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq, we are living with spikes and upticks. This is not surprising. Our enemies are incensed and inspired. These are the actions and the reactions of war. Such a price would have been worth paying for the elimination of one of the most lethal arsenals in the world in the hands of one of the most heartless tyrants in the world. But *mourir pour le Niger*?

This leaves the other justification for the war, the ennobling one. I say this without irony, and I refer to the democratization of Iraq. I can imagine no grander historical experiment in our time than the effort to bring a liberal order to an Arab society. Like the objective of a disarmed Iraq, the objective of a democratic Iraq has both strategic and moral dimensions. The autocratic regimes and inert societies of the Arab world, the shocking immobilism of Arab existence in the middle of history's wildest acceleration, are responsible for the creation of monsters like Mohamed Atta, who choose death prospects because they lack life prospects. Political development in the Arab world is there-

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fore a long-term requirement of Western security. Moreover, the war in Iraq represents a fine repudiation of the "civilizational" analysis of the world, the polite and polysyllabic rehabilitation of global prejudice, of which conservatives have been so enamored recently. And that cruel analysis, which denies the universalist scope of the democratic ideal, is weirdly shared also by jihadists and progressives, who concur that the liberalization of Iraq is nothing more than an imperialist adventure.

Still, some murmurings are in order. It is important to remember that freedom is not the same thing as democracy. When people are liberated, they become free to be what they already are. They almost never are already a democracy. Democracy is an elaborate structure of principles and institutions. It is built, not found. The liberation of Iraq is only a condition for the democratization of Iraq. Finally the fate of Iraq is in the hands of Iraqis. If Iraq becomes a theocracy, or succumbs to a strongman, or collapses as a state, all this, too, will be the work of a free Iraq. For this reason, it is important to remember also that democratization is essentially a policy of destabilization. It demands the overthrow of one political culture so that another political culture may take its place. (That is why the outrages at Abu Ghraib and elsewhere are not only repugnant but also disastrous: "Hearts and minds" are precisely the field upon which democratizers make their stand. In this regard, nothing could be more damaging to the future of Iraq than Iraqi anti-Americanism.) It is absolutely astonishing that the planners of this war expected only happiness in its wake. Their postwar planning seems to have consisted in a kind of reverse Augustinianism: goodness is the absence of evil, Saddam is evil, Saddam's absence is good. They failed to intuit all the other evils that would emerge in the absence of this evil. They did not recognize the multiplicity of Iraq's demons; which is to say, they did not recognize Iraq. Here, too, they operated unempirically, in a universe of definitions and congratulations.

ALL THIS IS not to suggest that I have despaired of an admirable ending, of a better Iraq. There are many, many Iraqis who wish to live in an open and decent society. There are many Shia who do not wish to be ruled by *sharia*. The tribal and confessional realities of Iraq are not its whole story. And if a liberal order is created in Iraq, a regional revolution will have been accomplished. But it will not be brought into being swiftly or smoothly. The war for Iraqi freedom will be followed by the war for Iraqi identity. Every society has the right, the duty, to determine what kind of society it will be. This determination is sometimes made violently. (The Civil War in America was the delayed war of the American Constitution.) Insofar as the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein suppressed the struggle among the claimants for the character of Iraq, its peace was a false peace, a postponement of the country's hour of truth. The American war in Iraq has brought Iraq to its hour. Yet the war for Iraqi identity is not an American war, even if America has important interests in its outcome. We must do what we can to assist the democratic forces, not least with the problem of public order. (Iraqi power plus electrification, one is tempted to say.) But if we are remaining in Iraq, it is not because we are confident of a Jeffersonian tomorrow. We cannot withdraw from Iraq because we would leave behind the greatest gift to theocratic terror since Afghanistan, and because we would betray the democrats and the pluralists and the Kurds.

IS THIS CONTINUED support for the war? Then I continue to support the war. But I have come to despise some of the people who are directing it. History, and we have been punished with a good deal of it on their watch, has not enlarged them. They are rigid and sectarian and righteous. Mentally, they do not live in the wide world. They do not see that the leadership of the most powerful country on earth demands a certain cosmopolitanism of mind. Main Street is all they wish to know. They think that French is funny. The more I observe Bush and Cheney and Rumsfeld, the more I discover the deep and unwitting similarities between unilateralism and isolationism. Like the isolationist, the unilateralist believes that the United States is alone in the world, and that there is honor in its aloneness. Like the isolationist, the unilateralist regards international alliances expediently, cynically. (When he finds himself frantically relying upon foreign countries and international institutions to assist him in difficult circumstances, like George W. Bush in postwar Iraq, he thinks no second thoughts about the blandishments of "foreign entanglements." He merely exploits the entanglements.) Like the isolationist, the unilateralist thinks that we can provide for ourselves everything that we need, everything that is precious.

It is no wonder that this administration has presided over a new flourishing of anti-Americanism. It accepts anti-Americanism as a compliment. It holds that all anti-Americanism is like all other anti-Americanism, and is in no way to be imputed to American behavior. In this way, the Bush administration has transformed anti-Americanism into one of the most urgent, and least addressed, problems facing American foreign policy. In a time when the safety of the United States depends more and more upon the cooperation of other states and other societies—the struggle against terrorism is a struggle against stateless villains organized in far-flung networks—the foreign policy of the United States surrendered to Gary Cooperism. Our leaders are all such legends in their own eyes. But after Will Kane shot Frank Miller dead, you will recall, he left town. The unilateralist became an isolationalist. The transition was easy. He would rely forevermore upon his sanctimony and his hauteur.

The rule of Saddam Hussein was uncommonly brutal. Its destruction represents a triumph of the idealistic strain in American foreign policy. Americans may be proud of having rid the world of such a horror. But the Bush administration's mistakes, many of them the consequences of its various theologies, have somewhat disgraced idealism, and this, too, is a disservice to America. The course of the war in

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Iraq may persuade many Americans to revert to America's inward-looking habits. And the Bush administration is singularly ill-suited to teach those Americans about the glories of internationalism. Though the president and the vice president are acting with force internationally, they are not exactly internationalists. They are not national greatness conservatives, they are national smallness conservatives. But who are the national greatness liberals? ■

Is the Vietnam syndrome back?

Fires Next Time

BY JOSEPH R. BIDEN JR.

A YEAR AND A half ago, I voted to give President Bush the authority to use force in Iraq. I still believe my vote was just—but the president's use of that authority was unwise in ways I never imagined.

I've served with seven presidents during my 32 years in the Senate. Four of them—Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush—were governors who came to office with virtually no foreign policy experience. I assumed that Bush would do what his predecessors had done: pick the smartest people on his side of the aisle, encourage them to argue and advocate—and keep an open mind.

Consequently, I thought I could be more effective working behind the scenes with those in the administration who generally shared my views than I could lobbing partisan bombs in public. I was encouraged in this course by the president's initial reaction to September 11: Instead of lashing out, he looked for international support, building a case and a coalition before attacking Afghanistan. Conferring regularly with Secretary of State Colin Powell, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, and national security adviser Condoleezza Rice, I kept most of my criticism private and publicly praised the administration when it did what I thought was right, to the occasional consternation of some of my Democratic colleagues.

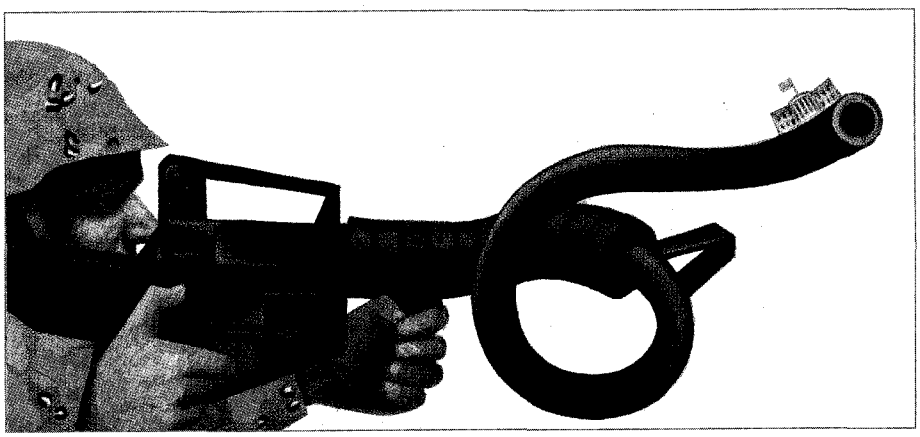
In the long run-up to Iraq, I expected the president to follow a similar course, siding not with the ideologues in his administration but with the cooler heads in Powell's camp and with the political hands in Karl Rove's shop (polling data showed the American people wanted Bush to go to Congress and the United Nations and to try everything short of war before invading Iraq).

At first, that is what he did. He resisted the advice of some in his administration to attack Iraq immediately after September 11. He ignored those who urged him to bypass the United Nations, and he similarly rejected the advice of his own White House legal counsel, who said it was not necessary to go to Capitol Hill for support.

When the president did come to Congress in September 2002, authorizing the use of force made sense. Following the 1991 Gulf war, the United Nations had ordered Iraq to declare and destroy its weapons of mass destruction capabilities unconditionally. But, instead of doing so, Saddam Hussein spent a decade playing cat and mouse with the U.N. inspectors sent to verify his compliance with the Security Council's demands. The international community's need to enforce these U.N. resolutions provided a compelling case for war. After all, absent enforcement, such rules would become meaningless, and the international system of laws and norms, which benefits the United States more than any other country, would be badly undermined.

To be sure, many others cheat on or ignore the rules. But Iraq was the perfect storm. Saddam was a sadistic dictator who had used chemical weapons against the Kurds and the Iranians, murdered tens of thousands of Shia, and fired Scud missiles at Israel. He posed a permanent threat to his neighbors. If we had allowed the sanctions system to collapse, or even atrophy, and left Saddam alone for five years with billions of dollars in oil revenue, I'm convinced he would have acquired a nuclear weapon—intelligence suggested he still wanted one—thereby dramatically changing the strategic equation in the Middle East.

The draft resolution the White House initially sent to Congress would have given the president extraordinarily broad authority to wage war. Senator Richard Lugar and I joined forces to significantly restrict that mandate. While the alternative resolution we proposed was not enacted, it helped force the administration to accept more limited terms. The objective of the authorization Congress ultimately endorsed was disarmament, not regime change. The ratio-



RAY BARTKUS

Joseph R. Biden Jr. is the ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

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nale was enforcement of the relevant U.N. resolutions as opposed to preemption of a gathering threat. The scope of the authorization was narrowed from allowing Bush to use force anywhere in the Middle East to Iraq specifically. And the desirability of enlisting international support was made very clear. In voting for the resolution, I believed Congress was giving the president a strong hand to play at the United Nations whereby he could convince the world to speak with one voice to Saddam: Disarm or be disarmed. If he failed to listen and forced us to act, at least we would have the world with us.

But, as pragmatists in the administration like Powell labored to keep the focus on enforcement, the ideologues were trying to use Iraq to ensconce a new doctrine for U.S. foreign policy: military preemption. The right to act preemptively against an imminent threat has always been a weapon in our foreign policy arsenal. And, while deterrence and containment got us through the cold war, after September 11 there was legitimate concern that they would not suffice against a stateless enemy with WMD. Unfortunately, the administration tried to turn preemption from a necessary option to a one-size-fits-all strategy—a strategy to which other countries roundly objected. Using Iraq as the test case for this new doctrine made little sense because Iraq posed no near-term threat to U.S. security, and it made it infinitely harder for us to get international backing, thereby planting the seeds for some of our current troubles.

Nevertheless, by the end of 2002, the president had sided with the ideologues. He allowed military strategy to trump diplomatic efforts. He hyped intelligence about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programs to create a sense of urgency. And he gave up on securing more international support when he abandoned the effort to pass a second Security Council resolution. As a result, we rushed to war on misguided premises. We're paying a price for that haste today.

I'VE ASKED MYSELF many times whether there is more Congress could and should have done to slow the rush to war, even after we authorized the use of force, but the truth is that many of us repeatedly warned the administration about the mistakes it was making.

First, we urged the administration to plan for the day after an invasion of Iraq. Eight months before the war, Lugar and I wrote in *The New York Times*, "[W]hen Saddam Hussein is gone, what would be our responsibilities? This question has not been explored but may prove to be the most critical. ... Given Iraq's strategic location, its large oil reserves and the suffering of the Iraqi people, we cannot afford to replace a despot with chaos. We need to assess what it would take to rebuild Iraq economically and politically." Experts at hearings we convened, think-tank studies, and even some in the administration itself—such as the authors of the State Department's Future of Iraq Project—predicted many of the problems we now face: the sorry state of Iraq's infrastructure, the likelihood of postwar looting and resistance, the impossibility that Iraq's oil revenue would pay for reconstruction, the need for 5,000 international police to train the Iraqis, and the folly of relying on exiles with no constituencies in Iraq.

Second, many of us implored the administration to build an effective coalition. Not because we needed a single foreign soldier to win the war, but because we needed them to secure the peace and to increase the legitimacy of our temporary, but necessary, occupation of Iraq. Because Iraq posed no imminent threat to our security, we could have taken the time to do it right. For some of our allies, such as France and Germany, war probably was never an option, but, according to my sources (and many reports in the media), for the price of a 30-day delay, we could have convinced a majority of the Security Council to support a second U.N. resolution.

Third, many in Congress questioned the administration's plan to go into Iraq with relatively few troops in order to validate a new theory of warfare and invalidate the Powell Doctrine, which called for the use of overwhelming force in any conflict. Army Chief of Staff General Eric Shinseki was ridiculed for suggesting it would take several hundred thousand troops to secure Iraq. He looks prescient today. The failure to heed such warnings made it difficult to secure post-Saddam Iraq and produced a power vacuum that was filled by militias, insurgents, and criminals.

Fourth, many of us warned the administration that it would take years, not months, to train Iraqis to provide for their own security. When Senators Chuck Hagel, Dick Lugar, and I went to Baghdad last summer, American experts on the ground told us it would take five years to train an Iraqi police force of 75,000 and three years to train an Iraqi army of 40,000. But the administration insisted on putting 200,000 Iraqis in uniform right away, and, as a result, only about 10 percent of the police and army now operating in Iraq have been fully trained. Virtually none are adequately equipped. While many have acted with incredible bravery, others have abandoned their posts, and some have even taken up arms against us.

In the months following the war, many of us have sounded like broken records, repeatedly calling on the president to unite the international community in helping reconstruct Iraq. At the end of major combat operations, when our apparent success gave us the high ground, many who sat out the war were ready to help—if we had just asked. Both France and Germany publicly volunteered police trainers, for example, and last December, French President Jacques Chirac told me he would support NATO involvement in Iraq, though it's clear today that France is very unlikely to send troops. Instead of soliciting such assistance, the administration tried to deny its critics postwar reconstruction contracts and served "freedom toast" on Air Force One. Maybe there was no way to convince France and Germany to send troops to Iraq. But, since Saddam was toppled, we've denied ourselves the help of tens of thousands of Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Turks, and others. I hope the administration's belated success in securing a new U.N. resolution begins to change that dynamic.

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MUCH HAS BEEN said about the potential consequences of failure in Iraq—how it would provide a new haven for terrorists, deal a blow to reformers and modernizers throughout the region, and encourage radicals in Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. But perhaps failure's most pernicious legacy will be a further hardening of the Democratic Party's Vietnam syndrome—its distrust of government and the use of American power.

That syndrome is one reason why, from day one, many of us in Congress pressed the president to level with the American people about what would be required to prevail in Iraq. But he didn't. He didn't tell them that well over 100,000 troops would be needed for well over two years. He didn't tell them the cost would surpass $200 billion—and far exceed Iraq's oil revenue. He didn't tell them that our children and grandchildren would pay the bill because of his refusal to rescind even a small portion of the tax cut he gave to the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans. He didn't tell them that, even after paying such a heavy price, success was not assured, because no one had ever succeeded at forcibly democratizing a nation in the Middle East, let alone an entire region.

As a result, today those who recognize that we must persevere in Iraq risk losing public support. Americans sense that our policy is adrift and that we do not have a plan for success. Worse, they may conclude that this is what happens when we venture abroad. Someday, probably sooner rather than later, there will be another Slobodan Milosevic or another Saddam, and the profound mistakes in Iraq will make it harder to generate domestic and international political support for the use of force. That is a legacy we can ill afford.

Maybe, as some argue, so many mistakes have been made in Iraq that it is impossible to turn the corner. Anti-American attitudes and a nascent warlordism may already be so deeply entrenched that there is little we can do to succeed. It would be foolhardy to deny that possibility. But it would be even more foolhardy, and dangerous, to accept failure as inevitable and move to cut our losses. Despite the naysayers, it is not too late. But only the president can alter our course in Iraq. As he did when Congress first authorized him to use force, the president has the choice of using his power effectively or squandering it to satisfy ideological predilections. Let us hope he has grown wiser in the past year. ■

Class Action

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Despite everything, the right war.

Hard Truth

BY JOHN MCCAIN

LAST AUGUST, DURING my first trip to Iraq, I was struck not by hostility toward the United States for toppling Saddam Hussein—I encountered none—but by a burning ambition among Iraqis to build their country anew. Nothing I saw then and nothing I have learned since has changed my conviction that the war was just. We were right to liberate Iraq and end Saddam's threat to the world.

Still, we have learned some bitter lessons in the process. Our intelligence failed—we greatly overestimated Iraq's weapons of mass destruction while underestimating Saddam's destruction of Iraq's human capital. We invaded Iraq with enough troops to topple the regime, but not enough to prevent looting, stabilize the country, or maintain security. The administration misjudged the natural nationalism of the Iraqi people and hesitated to hand them true power over their own affairs—an error that has compounded the sense of unwanted occupation that prevails in some parts of the country. Yet, while we have made costly mistakes and encountered serious obstacles, the decision to invade Iraq was the correct one, on both security and moral grounds.

BY EARLY 2003, the status quo Iraq policy—a kind of weak containment that no longer enjoyed much international support—was crumbling and simply could not be sustained. The sanctions regime no longer constrained Saddam's ability to spend money as he wished, and the regime was growing stronger, not weaker. Critics around the world were demanding that sanctions be lifted, U.S. and British warplanes were taking frequent fire in the no-fly zones in northern and southern Iraq, thousands of American troops were based in Saudi Arabia to deter Saddam, and Iraq remained in violation of 17 Security Council resolutions. Things were falling apart.

Then there were the weapons of mass destruction. Former chief weapons inspector David Kay has said that "we were almost all wrong," and, at this point, it is hard to argue with his assessment. I am serving on the commission that will examine prewar intelligence failures, and we will get to the bottom of this critical issue. But, while supporters of the war probably erred in depending too heavily on WMD as the basis for their argument, the key word in Kay's phrase is "all." Let's recall the facts as we knew them in March 2003. U.S. intelligence agencies concluded that Saddam possessed chemical and biological weapons and might be pursuing a

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nuclear weapons program. Most European intelligence services agreed that Saddam had active WMD programs. Even Hans Blix and his U.N. inspectors, often critics of U.S. positions, acknowledged that Baghdad may have been concealing weapons of mass destruction. If Saddam had secretly destroyed the weapons he was believed to possess, he had numerous opportunities to document this destruction and announce it to the world. But he did not do so.

At the same time, the world was painfully familiar with Saddam's use of WMD in the past, including his chemical attacks on Iranians and Kurds. We knew that Saddam was by far the most belligerent leader in the region, having invaded and pillaged Kuwait, launched missiles at Saudi Arabia and Israel, killed hundreds of thousands of his own people, and attempted to assassinate a former American president. We also knew of Saddam's past involvement in terrorism and his hatred of America. And we knew that, even if Saddam's WMD programs were destroyed, he planned to restart them once the time was right—presumably, once sanctions had fallen apart, he had his hands on billions of dollars in oil revenue, and international attention was again distracted. This was the situation in early 2003: The threat was grave and gathering.

But, even if Saddam had forever abandoned his WMD ambitions, it was still right to topple the dictator. I supported humanitarian intervention in order to stop genocide in Kosovo, and I wish the United States had acted—with force if necessary—to stop genocide in Rwanda. In neither of these places were America's vital national security interests at stake. But our national values were: The United States should not stand silently by in the face of massive humanitarian destruction. Time and time again, the world has witnessed vast brutality, done nothing, and then said "never again." In Iraq last year, we ensured that Saddam could never again slaughter Iraqis.

Added to this justification for war were the potential benefits to the region—the ripple effects that a free and democratic Iraqi state can still have on the Middle East. Naysayers have accused hawks of playing dice with people's lives: How could we possibly know that a democratic Iraq would have a demonstration effect on the region? On one level, they are correct; we cannot know. But we did know what would happen if we didn't try. The ossified situation in the Middle East, with its utter lack of political freedom or economic opportunity for millions of men and women, helps breed murderous ideologies that threaten the United States. And the region's autocratic but pro-American regimes are increasingly incapable of stifling these deadly, anti-Western tendencies in their own people. The Saudi regime pledges its love and respect for the United States, yet 15 of 19 September 11 hijackers were Saudi. Establishing a democratic Iraq in the heart of the region was, and remains, our best chance for encouraging the necessary transformation of the Middle East. Already, the effects of Iraq are being felt: A major reform conference recently took place in Alexandria, Egypt, and the Arab League has endorsed a reform agenda.

So, in the end, we had essentially three choices—deal with Saddam early, while we could; deal with Saddam later, after sanctions had lost force, he had resuscitated his weapons programs, and more Iraqis had lost their lives; or simply sit back and hope for the best. We were right to act. And we have paid a high price for our noble ambitions—over 800 Americans dead, well over $100 billion and counting spent on the war, disgrace at Abu Ghraib. But, when I stood in August at the mass grave at Hilla, where 10,000 Iraqis were executed—some tied together and shot so as to save bullets—I did not wish to take it all back. We believed we would be greeted as liberators, and in many places we have been—not everywhere, to be sure, but, during my visit to the country, there was widespread thanks for the coalition.

Should we have done things differently? Of course. We should have worked harder before the war to get more European allies on board and offered greater political support to those nations that did join our coalition. We should have invaded with more troops, acted more quickly to stop looting, stabilized key cities, secured arms depots and borders, and established checkpoints in key areas. We should have handed power more rapidly to Iraqis. But were we wrong to invade? No. On the biggest question of all—whether Saddam had to go, by force if necessary—we were right. I would do it again today. ■

Why we went, what we've found.

Best Intentions

BY FOUAD AJAMI

The dictators in the Arab-Muslim world, and those in Europe who tolerate them, can now rest easier. The Syrian dictator will not be chased into a "spider hole." And the Iranian theocracy will not be sacked by soldiers from West Virginia and Indiana and Vermont. The Iranians will have to secure their own liberty; we know better than to provide it to strangers sure to second-guess the morning after. Yes, America is embattled in Iraq. But its leaders took up the sword against Arab-Muslim troubles and dared to think that tyranny was not fated and inevitable for the Arabs. And, even as this war falls short of what we had wanted, it was an honorable and noble expedition that came after a decade of relentless anti-American subversion and terrorism. Appeasement had not worked. The "moderns," with Bill Clinton as their standard-bearer, had been sure we would be delivered by the marketplace and the spread of the World Wide Web. History had mocked them, and us all. In Kabul and Baghdad, we were simply answering history's call.

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"The justice of a cause is not a promise of its success," the editors wrote in these pages in a recent reassessment of the Iraq war. And it is the justice of the war that we need to recall as its fortunes hang in the balance in Iraq and in the scales of American opinion. It's too late to debate whether this was a war of necessity or of choice. For me, it was a just war that issued out of a deep American frustration with the "road rage" of the Arab world and with the culture of terrorism that had put down roots in Arab lands. It was not an isolated band of "misguided" young men who came America's way on September 11, 2001. They emerged out of the Arab world's dominant culture and malignancies. There were the financiers who subsidized the terrorism. There were the intellectuals who winked at the terrorism and justified it. There were the preachers—from Arabia to Amsterdam and Finsbury Park—who gave it religious sanction and cover. And there were the Arab rulers whose authoritarian orders produced the terrorism and who looked away from it so long as it targeted foreign shores.

Afghanistan was the setting for the first battle against Arab radicalism. That desperate, impoverished land had been hijacked, rented if you will, by the Arab jihadists and their masters and financiers. Iraq followed: America wanted to get closer to the source of the troubles in the Arab world. It wasn't democracy that was at stake in Iraq. It was something more limited, but important and achievable in its own way: a state less lethal to its own people and to the lands and peoples around it. Iraq's political culture had been poisoned by a crude theory of race and a racialist Arabism that had wrecked and unsettled Arab and Muslim life in the 1980s and 1990s. The Tikriti rulers had ignited a Sunni-Shia war within and over Islam. They had given Arabs a cruel view of history—iron and fire and bigotry. They had, for all practical purposes, cut off the Arab world from the possibility of a decent, modern life.

For me, the surprise of this war has been the response of the Shia to the liberty granted them, and to the foreign power that provided it. They have taken the gift, but they have kept their distance from the giver. With the fall of Tikriti despotism, the Shia have come into their own, and their subjugation is behind them. But the incoherence of their politics is the response of a people yet to come to anything resembling "normal" political life. From darkness and fear, they have stepped forth into a blinding light. They take delirium for politics. And, though they know how cruel and indifferent the Arab world was to them during their long nightmare, they remain curiously eager for its approval and bound by its judgment and prohibitions. Someday, they may come to a full political life. But that is little consolation to us and to our soldiers who did battle and paid dearly in Sadr City and Najaf.

IT IS EASY to say that the expedition in Iraq is the product of American innocence. And it is easy to see that the American regent, L. Paul Bremer, didn't find his way to the deep recesses of Iraqi culture. It is painfully obvious that, at the Abu Ghraib prison, some of America's soldiers and military police broke the codes of war and of military justice. In the streets of Falluja and Najaf, the early American hopes of a culture that would be grateful for its liberty, and eager to create a new political order, may have been battered. But there can be no doubting the nobility of the effort. Abu Ghraib isn't the U.S. war, but merely the failure of a small number of our soldiers to honor the mission entrusted to them. I traveled twice to Iraq over the last year. In the tent cities in Kuwait, and in Kirkuk and Mosul and Baghdad, I saw our military up close. Their devotion to the work of rescue was moving; their sympathy for the Iraqis remarkable in the midst of insurgency and war.

This has been a unique kind of war: rifle in one hand, wrench in the other is how one of our commanders described our mission. This was not some "rogue operation" willed by the White House and by the Department of Defense. It wasn't Paul Wolfowitz's war. It was a war waged with congressional authorization and fought in the shadow of a terrible calamity visited upon America on September 11. Sure enough, we didn't have the support of Kofi Annan or of Jacques Chirac. But Americans could be forgiven a touch of raw pride: We hadn't had the approval of Boutros Boutros-Ghali (or of the head of his peacekeeping operations at the time, the same Kofi Annan) or of François Mitterrand when America rode to the rescue of the Bosnians in 1995.

My sense of Iraq, and of the U.S. expedition, is indelibly marked by the images and thoughts that came to me on those two trips to that country. A sense of America's power alternated with thoughts of our solitude and isolation in an alien world. The armies and machines—and earnestness—of a great foreign power against the background of a big, impenetrable region: We could awe them and they could outwait us. We could repair their infrastructure, and the insurgents could wreck it. We could "stand up" and train civil defense and police units, and they could disappear just when we needed them. We could entertain for them hopes of a decent political culture, and they could hold up against us a religious bigotry sharpened for combat and intolerance. We are not to stay long: That is clear to us and, for all their protestations to the contrary, to them as well. Politically, the U.S. interlude in Iraq is coming to a close. Beyond the prison of the old despotism, the Iraqis have found the hazards and uncertainties—and promise—of freedom.

It would have been heady and right had they brought about their own liberty, had they demolished the prisons and the statues on their own. And it would have been easier and more comforting had we not redeemed their liberty with such heartbreaking American losses. There might have been greater American support for the war had the Iraqis not been too proud to admit that they needed the stranger's gift and had we come to a decent relationship with them. But we take that world as it is. In Kurdistan, we have provided protection to a people who have made good use of this new order. There is no excessive or contrived religious

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zeal in Kurdistan, and the nationalism that blows there seems free of chauvinism and delirium. In the rest of the country, we have rolled history's dice. Iraq may not give us the base of power in the Persian Gulf we had hoped for at the outset of the war. We can live without that strategic gain. It is the Iraqis, more than we, who will need the saving graces of moderate politics.

An officer in the Marine Corps, trying to speak to my anxieties about this war, offered a soldier's consolation—the clarifying power of time and of patience. Tell me in 20 years, he wrote, how this war will have turned out, for it will take that long for it to reveal its full harvest. We judge quicker. Without the soldiers' mission, without their poise, we ride the roller coaster of a war whose justice and heartbreak alternate in endless succession. Nowadays, you dread the Department of Defense releases of the mounting number of those predominantly young men lost in the "Iraq theater of operations." Nowadays, you look away in hurt from the crawl at the bottom of the TV screen bringing news of another roadside bomb and another American fatality. It hasn't been easy and it hasn't been cheap, this new military campaign brought about by the coming apart of an Arab-Muslim world unwilling to deal with its despotisms and purveyors of terrorism. It would be a consolation were we to think that, after Kabul and Baghdad, there would be repose and an end to vigilance. But we should know the burning grounds of the Arab-Muslim world better by now. And we can be forgiven the premonition that this isn't the end of the matter.

"WE'RE DUE SOME luck," one of our most astute military leaders in the Iraq theater of operations, Major General Stephen Speakes, wrote me in an e-mail in late May. He was prescient. Our luck came in the most paradoxical of ways. Only days later, the Governing Council selected one of its own, Sheik Ghazi Al Yawar, for the presidency of Iraq. The man hailed from the Shammar, one of the great Arabian tribes, a Sunni tribe with a substantial Shia branch. The Iraqis were done with Bremer's tutelage, and with U.N. envoy Lakhdar Brahimi. Bremer and Brahimi had wanted the 81-year-old Adnan Pachachi for president. The Governing Council's rebellion, and the joy in the city of Mosul, where Yawar was born, was the beginning of our redemption in Iraq.

Our writ had been rejected. And, on that very day, the country's designated prime minister, Iyad Allawi, a Shia secularist given to secrecy—and with strong ties to "reformed" Baathists and former Sunni operatives who had broken with the old regime—acknowledged a debt of gratitude owed by Iraqis to the American-led coalition and its soldiers. Our stewardship of Iraq is still loaded with troubles. But our soldiers have made our luck. A measure of success, and hence of our deliverance, is now in the realm of the possible. Iraqis may yet go beyond us and still find their way. If this comes to pass, we could not hope for a better retrospect of our time, and our mission, in Iraq. ■

Misunderstanding the cold war.

Back in the USSR

BY ANNE APPLEBAUM

I WAS IN Britain in the summer of 2002 when Europeans first got wind of the American plan to invade Iraq. As it happened, they learned this news not from President George W. Bush, not from Secretary of State Colin Powell, and not from the American ambassador, but rather from a leak that appeared in *The New York Times*. The debate began immediately. The archbishop of Canterbury denounced the war, *The Daily Telegraph* denounced the archbishop of Canterbury, and so on. Instantly, the war became a central issue in the German election campaign.

Looking back on it, this was an important moment—a real turning point in the war on terrorism. Instead of responding truthfully to the European debate, the Bush administration flatly denied that any invasion of Iraq was imminent. Instead of engaging the European public, Bush said he was still "explor[ing] all options and all tools at my disposal." No one believed him—and, of course, they were right not to.

Looking back on it, this was also the point at which I should have questioned some of my early assumptions about the Bush administration. Until then, I had taken it for granted that the administration's big hitters—Vice President Dick Cheney, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, his deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, national security adviser Condoleezza Rice, and, to some extent, even Powell—were united, if nothing else, by one common experience: All had been staunch opponents of the Soviet Union. That meant not only that they'd been right about the cold war, but that they knew that we had won it only partly thanks to U.S. military strength. As we have been reminded in recent days, Ronald Reagan's launch of the Strategic Defense Initiative did finally scare the Soviets into attempting perestroika at the end of the 1980s. But the web of alliances that the United States created over the previous half-century to fight its military battles, as well as the ideological war for democracy and capitalism, were just as important as Star Wars, if not more so. The events of 1989 may seem inevitable in retrospect, but, 50 years ago, it was not at all obvious that the stable, prosperous Western Europe we now take for granted would emerge from the disaster of World War II. Communist parties were—and long remained—very powerful in France and Italy. Radical terrorists threatened the stability of Germany. The Soviet Union was funding those groups

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and, at the same time, filling East German warehouses with guns and ammunition in preparation for an invasion.

Not military power alone, but military power coupled with creative political decisions ultimately prevented communist regimes from coming to power in Western Europe. By this, I do not mean the United Nations, but rather the Marshall Plan; the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); the trade organizations; and the small, but enormously influential, Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. Institutions like these not only kept the Red Army on the far side of Checkpoint Charlie, but they also attracted the admiration and envy of Eastern Europeans. In the end, the mere existence of a strong, free, and prosperous Western Europe beside a weak, totalitarian, and impoverished Eastern Europe proved more powerful than all the American military's European divisions put together. The Berlin Wall fell, in large part, because of the political, economic, and ideological success of the Western alliance. The Soviet bloc wasn't defeated so much as persuaded to switch sides.

After September 11, I was certain that the Bush administration, packed with old cold warriors as it was, would also treat the war on terrorism as a moral and ideological battle, a struggle for hearts and minds, and not just an opportunity for the United States to show off its advanced weapons systems. Certainly the president himself often spoke that way, even explicitly comparing the war on terrorism to the cold war. It was odd, and somehow ominous, that the administration made so little use of NATO forces in the first phase of the battle for Kabul. It was strange that Rumsfeld sounded so cavalier about the Geneva Conventions—surely the sort of treaty that reflects the kind of values we want to advertise—and that the Defense Department happily published photographs of bound prisoners being marched into cells at Guantanamo Bay. But, given the time pressures and the urgency, those decisions seemed just about excusable.

What came next, however, was totally inexcusable: an arrogance so extreme that American politicians who had benefited for decades from international alliances and treaties began to treat them as an unnecessary frill. "It's not just that we didn't need the Europeans in Afghanistan," those in sympathy with the administration were gleefully repeating to one another at the time. "The Europeans were *in the way* in Afghanistan." It was as if European military weakness negated Europe's substantial technical and intelligence cooperation, as if the U.S. war against the Taliban had not enjoyed widespread support. Never mind that there are still European troops—including French and German troops—in Afghanistan today, although few Americans are aware of it.

EVERYTHING ELSE FOLLOWED from that attitude: Bush's (and Powell's) failure to sell the Iraq war in Europe; the rise of international anti-Americanism. Even the Abu Ghraib scandal was, in its way, the product of a new White House attitude toward Western values, a puffed-up feeling that Americans are so superior that they no longer require the rule of law that defines Western civilization. The Geneva Conventions—those were Old Rules. We needed New Rules. And so we got them.

Incredibly, given their backgrounds, top Bush officials still seem not to understand that, like communism, radical Islam cannot be defeated with military power alone. Like communism, radical Islam is an ideology—one that people will die for. To fight it, the United States needs not just to show off its firepower, but also to prove to Arabs that Western values, in some moderate Islamic form, will give them better lives. The war on terrorism cannot be a narrow American or American-Israeli military struggle, or we will lose it. Like the cold war, the war on terrorism will be over when moderate Muslims abandon the radicals and join us.

Mistakenly, I assumed this was what the president meant when he talked, in that vague sort of way, about "democracy in the Middle East." The fact that he was vague didn't bother me, since this president is vague about a lot of things. But I should have been warier since, in this case, his vagueness was not just a personality tic or a speech impediment, but a sign of a deep lack of seriousness. In fact, this administration never had any interest in a dialogue with the Arab world. In the wake of the president's speech in February 2003 at the American Enterprise Institute, where Bush said it was "presumptuous and insulting" to suggest that the Arab world was uninterested in democracy, a German diplomat of my acquaintance told me that his government was flabbergasted: No one ever told them that the administration was gearing up to promote democracy or human rights in the Middle East, and no one had asked them for help or advice. Bush had been to Germany and had never even mentioned an invasion of Iraq, leading the German government to conclude that he wasn't interested in one.

But, even if Bush hadn't felt like discussing his plans with the admittedly unpalatable Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, there were alternatives. European countries are democracies ultimately run by voters. Yet, neither then nor later was there a serious American campaign, using ambassadors or diplomats who actually speak languages like French and Italian, to convince Europeans of the rightness of the Iraq war. Powell hardly traveled; neither did the president. Broadcast radio and TV stations were set up in the Arab world, but far too late. The time to create the Al Hurra channel—which broadcasts in Arabic and has been dubbed "the American answer to Al Jazeera"—was before the war in Iraq, not afterward. In 2002, the one decent, American-funded radio station in Iran was actually disemboweled in order to make way for more pop music. Instead of presenting the mullahs with an intellectual challenge, we seem to believe we can seduce the Muslim world with Britney Spears.

THE TRUTH, OF course, is that, for all its talk of universal human rights, this is not an administration that actually perceives itself as a part of something greater than the United States. For all of its talk about spreading American values to benighted foreign-

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ers, this is not an administration that even likes foreigners. It never occurred to me that American troops would arrive in Baghdad and have absolutely no idea what to do next, or who was important, or who was on their side. But then, I hadn't realized that the Pentagon leadership had no interest in or knowledge of the Iraqi people. I thought these were cold warriors, whereas in fact they are narrow-minded American nationalists, isolationists turned inside out.

Nothing is irreversible: Listening to everybody throw around labels like "quagmire" and "tragedy" when they speak about Iraq at the moment, I am reminded of the wise words of Zhou Enlai who, when asked his opinion of the French Revolution, allegedly shrugged and said, "It's too early to tell." Two hundred years is a short span of time, from a Chinese perspective, and, even from an American perspective, one or two years is a blink of an eye. It took 80 years to bring about the ideological defeat of the communist revolution, after all, and, even so, some communist outposts still survive. If we alter our thinking now, maybe we can rob radical Islam of its revolutionary glamour in a similar amount of time—assuming our mistakes in Europe and Iraq haven't already set us back a generation. ■

My debate with Bill Galston.

Mourning After

BY KENNETH POLLACK

BILL GALSTON IS one helluva debater. In the fall of 2002, well before the invasion of Iraq, I faced Bill—a University of Maryland professor and a former colleague of mine in the Clinton administration—in a public debate, and he kicked my rhetorical ass. He did it by holding up a copy of my book, *The Threatening Storm*, and saying to the audience, "If we were going to get Ken Pollack's war, I could be persuaded to support it. But we are not going to get Ken Pollack's war; we are going to get George Bush's war, and that is a war I will not support." Bill's words haunted me throughout the run-up to the invasion. Several months ago, I sent him a note conceding that he had been right.

The primary cause of our current problems in Iraq is the reckless, and often foolish, manner in which this administration has waged the war and the reconstruction. For that reason, when I think back to the prewar debate, the thought that nags at me most is that I, too, should have foreseen what Bill Galston did—that the Bush administration would not fight the war properly. It looms in my thinking as something that probably could have been known before the war and that, had I recognized it, might have led me down a different intellectual path.

THE ABSENCE OF an aggressive, threatening Iraqi WMD program was just as significant as the administration's mishandling of the occupation. But, for all of the reasons I laid out in an article in the January 2004 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*, it would have been extremely difficult to recognize this before the war. Although it is commonplace for people to come forth after the fact and insist they had known all along, the truth is that very, very few of those claiming "I told you so" actually did. There was a consensus among the governments of the world and a virtual consensus among the experts about the basic threat from Iraq; the great debate was over whether a war was necessary to remedy it. Few claimed that Iraq had no WMD programs, many of those who did seemed to have been discredited in some way or another, and they argued with less evidence than could be mustered in support of the mainstream position.

Other aspects of my rationale for why a war would ultimately be necessary—just not when and how the Bush administration waged it—have been borne out by the course of events. The human rights argument was always an important element of my thinking, and the revelations of mass starvation throughout the Shia south and mass graves throughout the country have substantiated at least this aspect of the argument.

Similarly, Saddam again proved himself to be exactly the kind of dangerous decision-maker that I, and other Iraq experts, feared would make him difficult to deter if he were to acquire nuclear weapons. Here I want to take issue with an assertion that Tom Friedman has made—that, since Saddam was not known to be suicidal, he could have been deterred, even if he were to acquire nuclear weapons. While I have the utmost respect for Tom, I think this point is ahistorical at best. The annals of warfare abound with leaders who embarked on foreign policy adventures they did not believe would result in their own destruction—political or literal—but that did. Napoleon did not think he was committing suicide when he invaded Russia, but he was. Hannibal did not think he was committing suicide when he attacked Rome, but he was. Not even Hitler thought he was committing suicide when he launched World War II, but he was. There is a long, long list of other examples.

Saddam himself had embarked on a number of monstrously risky foreign policy adventures during his 30-plus years in power—many of which could easily have proved suicidal and were seen as such even by the sycophants who comprised his inner circle. The fact that they did not lead to his fall was mostly dumb luck. Over the last year, the debriefings of senior Iraqi officials captured during the invasion have revealed that, even with roughly 100,000 ground troops massed on the Iraqi border, Saddam convinced himself that the United States would never actually launch a war and, therefore, he could continue to play games with

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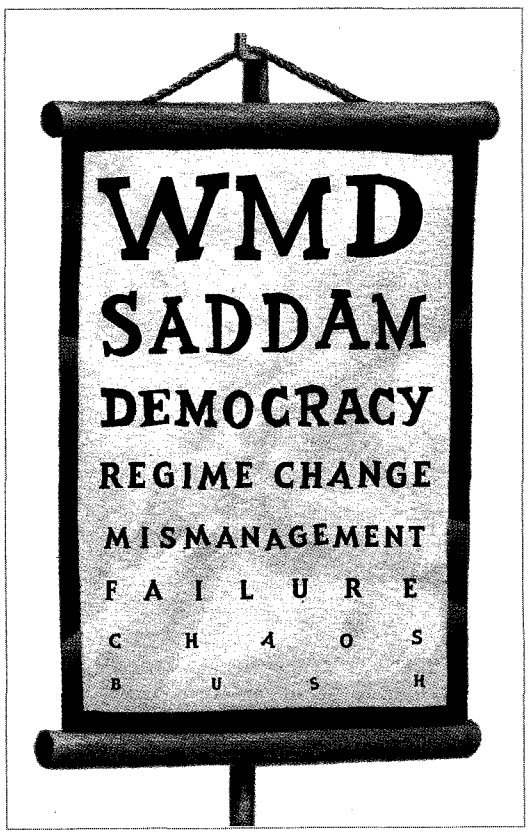
weapons inspectors. But, this time, Saddam's luck finally ran out and his reckless and delusional risk-taking resulted in his own (political, at least) suicide.

WHICH IS WHY my own thinking keeps coming back to that debate in the fall of 2002. Bill Galston was right on the money. The issue with which I constantly wrestle is whether I, too, should have foreseen that this administration would not do the job right.

To some extent, I had actually been expecting Bill's objection. Before my book was published, I asked *Foreign Affairs* Managing Editor Gideon Rose to critique the manuscript, and he warned me that the key question I might some day have to answer was whether I would still support a war fought *without* all the preparations I considered essential. Half of the argument of my book is devoted to the importance of going to war the right way (for example, by dealing with Al Qaeda and the war on terrorism first, restarting the Arab-Israeli peace process, building a large multinational coalition, employing at least 250,000 troops, and being ready to make a full commitment to what I expected would inevitably be a long and difficult process of reconstruction afterward). Gideon astutely observed that I might have to decide whether the war was still worth fighting if we were only going to do it the wrong way.

So, thanks to Gideon's caution, I was ready with a rejoinder to Bill that night. I said it was up to the American people to ensure that the Bush administration fought the war the right way. I even had evidence to back up my point. I noted that, although in the spring of 2002, Bush officials had insisted that they did not need the blessings of either Congress or the United Nations to invade Iraq, thanks to strong popular pressure, President Bush had chosen to seek out a congressional resolution of support and to go back to the United Nations to secure international sanction.

It wasn't a bad answer. In the fall of 2002, it *was* possible to believe that the administration would fight the war responsibly, and there was plenty of time to attend to all of the preconditions I had laid out in my book. But, even then, I harbored the fear that Bill was right and the Bush administration would not handle the war properly. Although the administration's policy in Afghanistan was still evolving, there were ominous signs that Bush officials were going to walk away from that problem as quickly as they could. Likewise, statements by some senior administration officials regarding Iraq suggested a rash determination to topple Saddam with little regard for the potential costs and risks—for example, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Woflowitz's dismissal of Army Chief of Staff Eric Shinseki's prescient estimate that we would need "several hundred thousand soldiers" to secure Iraq. I feared that, if they persevered in that approach, then, as I had warned in my book, a war with Iraq would create as many problems as it solved.



I STILL HAVE great difficulty fathoming why the administration chose not to fight the war the right way. I remain convinced that, while reconstruction was never guaranteed to succeed, the current mess we now find ourselves in is largely, if not entirely, a product of the administration's determination to do things the wrong way.

Why did they try to fight the war (and do the reconstruction) on the cheap? Why attack with only four divisions of ground troops when roughly another four were available—and were all deployed to Iraq within the following year (albeit only to relieve the invasion force)? Why did the administration seem to go out of its way to alienate so many of our allies and devote so little time to the U.N. process? Rumsfeld's quips about "old Europe" and not needing the British to fight the war seemed deliberately calculated to frighten off potential allies. Why, too, did they dismiss all of the preparations for postwar reconstruction performed by the Department of State, USAID, the intelligence community, the uniformed services, and a host of other agencies, and instead follow Ahmed Chalabi's siren song? It would have been one thing if none of that work had ever been carried out. But, as someone who participated in many of those exercises, I know that much good planning was available and was discarded by those in the Pentagon charged with reconstruction.

These questions are among the great mysteries of the war. At present, I suspect that the answers lie in a combination of factors: The "transformationists" in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (probably including the secretary himself) wanted to prove that a big Army was unnecessary; the president's political minders probably wanted to keep the war small and inexpensive to make it more palatable to the American public;

RAY BARTKUS

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and the administration's "regime changers" wanted to demonstrate that toppling rogue regimes could be accomplished cheaply and easily to make it possible to go after others.

I still do not believe it was obvious (or even inevitable) that the administration would act so recklessly. The past record of many of the Bush principals suggested the opposite—a key element in my own thinking whenever I pondered Bill Galston's charge. Secretary of State Colin Powell was famous for a doctrine that insisted that the United States fight wars only in a highly conservative fashion—with all of the resources at the disposal of the country and all of the support that could possibly be mustered. And, in the fall of 2002 and winter of 2003, after the president decided to go back to the United Nations, Powell again seemed to be playing a major role in steering Iraq policy. When Cheney was secretary of defense, he was famous for having told (not asked) General Norman Schwarzkopf that he was getting another 250,000 troops to fight the Gulf war. Indeed, many members of the Bush foreign policy team had served in the George H.W. Bush administration, which had done a magnificent job enlisting the support of the United Nations at a time when the United Nations was not considered a useful vehicle for building a war coalition. That administration had also done everything possible to ensure the kind of broad coalition of European, Asian, and Arab allies that we needed this time as well.

In addition to reversing course in the fall of 2002 to seek both a congressional resolution authorizing the use of force and a new U.N. resolution, this Bush administration had also taken other steps that initially demonstrated a willingness to fight the war the right way. In particular, many in the administration had once supported Ahmed Chalabi's harebrained scheme to send a few thousand lightly armed Iraqi oppositionists into Iraq, backed by nothing but U.S. air power, to try to take down Saddam's regime. But, when war suddenly became a real prospect, they dumped this nonsense and instead opted for a realistic invasion plan relying on a large American ground force—albeit one not big enough to handle postwar reconstruction.

THE WILLINGNESS OF members of the Bush administration to abandon their past records of prudence and match Saddam's reckless and delusional behavior with their own may have been the most important element missing from my own thinking about the war. By the time the war began, I recognized that they had not taken most of the precautionary measures I had recommended (although, even then, I did not realize the extent to which they had simply dismissed all the postwar planning done by agencies other than the Pentagon), and I was already anguished over the war.

Today, even knowing what I do about our mistaken assessment of Iraq's WMD and our mistaken decisions about postwar reconstruction, I remain deeply torn about the decision to invade Iraq. At this moment, there are still positives to be weighed against the growing negatives. But, as I warned beforehand, I suspect history will judge that decision based principally upon whether reconstruction succeeds or fails. If it fails—and Iraq and the region are plunged into chaos—as current trends threaten, then it will be hard for anyone to justify the war. ■

How we could have done it right.

Like It's 1999

BY FAREED ZAKARIA

FOREIGN POLICY IS not theology. The only way to make sensible choices in this realm is to weigh costs and benefits. A policy that might have been wise crumbles if the costs become prohibitive. For example, protecting South Vietnam from a communist invasion from the north was a worthwhile goal. The horrendous costs of doing so, however, made it a bad policy. For those of us who supported the war in Iraq, the question is simple—have the costs risen so high that they outweigh any benefit? It's a fair question, since the manner in which Iraq has been handled over the past 18 months has racked up enormous costs. Still, I think the intervention has the potential to be a success if we learn the lessons—the right lessons—of this last year and a half.

I was not one of those who had been urging another war against Iraq ever since the first Gulf war. Through the 1990s, I thought the strategy pursued by the first Bush and Clinton administrations—sanctions and containment—was a reasonable solution to a difficult problem. But, by the late '90s, this strategy was falling apart. In the isolated atmosphere created by sanctions, Saddam Hussein's grip on power had tightened. He had found ways to manipulate the sanctions system by cheating and smuggling (the best estimate of his take is $10 billion). Yet, the sanctions were pushing hundreds of thousands of Iraqis into poverty every year, a reality that was televised across the Arab world daily.

Keeping Saddam "in his box" meant air attacks almost weekly on Iraqi military facilities. It also meant the United States had to maintain a garrison in Saudi Arabia, something that was creating enormous regional instability. Recall that Osama bin Laden's infamous 1996 fatwa is titled "Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places." Bin Laden's main complaints against the United States were that it was "occupying" Saudi Arabia and starving the Iraqi people. Palestine came in a distant third. Being a man gifted with a great sense of mass appeal, bin Laden had calculated that these were the causes most likely to galvanize Arabs and Muslims.

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I did not believe Saddam had a lethal arsenal of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons, and I wrote as much in the months before the war (though, like everyone who is being honest, I am utterly astonished by what appears to be the lack of *any* weapons). But Saddam was an erratic, unpredictable leader who had been actively working against the United States and its interests—and peace in the region—for two decades. That meant he was a looming threat. Given the collapsing sanctions regime, at some point the United States would have to decide to move in one direction or the other. It could either welcome Saddam back into the community of nations and let him do what he would as a free agent. Or it could gather an international coalition to replace him. I wish that this latter policy had been pursued slowly and deliberately, with a genuine effort to forge a broad coalition and get the United Nations behind it. But, in the end, you have to decide whether to support the policy the president is pursuing—not the variation of it you wish he were pursuing. And I decided that, while timing and circumstances were not perfect, getting rid of one of the most ghastly regimes in the world, one that was a continued threat to U.S. interests, was worth supporting. Morality and realpolitik came together in the case against Saddam.

GIVEN WHAT'S HAPPENED in Iraq over the last year, was all this wrong? It is becoming conventional wisdom to speak of Iraq as an unmanageable crisis that no policy can untangle. "[Not] every problem has a solution," wrote Peter Galbraith in *The New York Review of Books*. But is that really the lesson of the last year? That nation-building is impossible in Iraq? That the Iraqis are savages who cannot govern themselves? That America is bound to fail in such endeavors?

If that is the case, then how to make sense of East Timor, Kosovo, and Bosnia (not to mention Japan, Germany, South Korea, and a host of other cases)? Over the last five years, the United States has helped these societies overcome terrible odds, maintain peace, and begin to build more decent governments. They are still far from perfect (Kosovo is, in fact, a mess), but they're a lot better off than they were. All of these places are quite different from Iraq, but, in some ways, the problems they posed were far more challenging. If, in Iraq, you face a potential civil war, in Bosnia you had an actual one, lasting for years, that had created deep scars. If Iraqi nationalism seems fierce, Serbian and Croatian nationalism was by any measure more violent and internecine. If—to take the unspoken assumption—Muslims are the problem, Bosnia and Kosovo have lots of them.

The real lesson of the last year is that the Bush administration's inept version of nation-building failed. The administration's strategists used Iraq as a laboratory to prove various deeply held prejudices: for example, that the Clinton administration's nation-building was fat and slow, that the United Nations was irrelevant, that the United States faced no problem of legitimacy in Iraq, that Ahmed Chalabi would become a Mesopotamian Charles de Gaulle. In almost every case, facts on the ground quickly disconfirmed these theories. But, so committed were these government officials to their ideology—and so powerful within the administration—that it took 14 months for policy to adjust to these failures. In the last month, the United States has finally reversed course, sending more troops, scaling back de-Baathification, dumping Chalabi, bringing in the United Nations, and listening to Iraqis on the ground. This shift in policy is already making a difference, easing the anti-Americanism and the sense of international isolation that has plagued the Iraq mission. If they keep up the reversals, Iraq still has a chance.

Compare Iraq with Afghanistan. Looked at in the abstract, Afghanistan is potentially far more chaotic than Iraq. It's a country riven with tribes and warlords that hasn't had a functioning state for 30 years—and perhaps not for three centuries. Yet, America's nation-building there has been more successful than in Iraq—with far less money spent on it. Many problems remain, but the country is unquestionably better off than it was under the Taliban. The simplest statistic to prove the point is that, since the fall of Kabul, two million Afghan refugees have returned to their country.

Why has Afghanistan been more successful than Iraq? In Afghanistan, the Bush administration adopted a version of postwar policies developed over the '90s. After the war, it handed the political process over to the United Nations and directed its military efforts through NATO. The United Nations was able to structure a political process (the *loya jirga*) that had legitimacy within Afghanistan as well as internationally. With some massaging, it produced a pro-Western liberal as president. Making the military efforts multinational has meant that today, the European Union spends about as much on Afghanistan as the United States and that the new Afghan army is being trained jointly by the United States and . . . France.

The biggest mistake I made on Iraq was to believe that the Bush administration would want to get Iraq right more than it wanted to prove its own prejudices right. I knew the administration went into Iraq with some crackpot ideas, but I also believed that, above all else, it would want success on the ground. I reasoned that it would drop its pet theories once it was clear they were not working. I still don't understand why the Bush team proved so self-defeatingly stubborn. Perhaps its initial success in Afghanistan emboldened it to move forward unconstrained. Perhaps its prejudices about Iraq had developed over decades and were deeply held. Perhaps the administration was far more divided and dysfunctional than I had recognized, making rational policy impossible.

BUT, SINCE WE are listing mistakes, the biggest one many opponents of the war are making is to claim that Iraq is a total distraction from the war on terrorism. In fact, Iraq is central to that conflict. I don't mean this in the deceptive and dishonest sense that many in the Bush administration have claimed. There is no

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connection between Saddam's regime and the *terrorists* of September 11. But there is a deep connection between his regime and the *terrorism* of September 11. The root causes of Islamic terrorism lie in the dysfunctional politics of the Middle East, where failure and repression have produced fundamentalism and violence. Political Islam grew in stature as a mystical alternative to the wretched reality—secular dictatorships—that have dominated the Arab world. A new Iraq provides an opportunity to break this perverse cycle. The country is unlikely to become a liberal democracy any time soon. But it might turn out to be a pluralistic state that gives minorities limited protections, allows for some political participation, and has a reasonably open society. That would be a revolution in the Arab world.

The right lesson of Iraq so far is not that nation-building must fail, but rather that President Bush's approach to it, unless corrected, will fail. The right lesson is not that U.S. military intervention always ruptures alliances and creates an enraged international public, but rather that this particular intervention did. Most important, it is not that American power aggressively employed does more harm than good. Rather, the right lesson is that American power, because it is so overweening, must be used with extraordinary care and wisdom. Most of the world's problems—from AIDS to the Israeli-Palestinian issue—would be better served with more American intervention, not less. But, because of the blunders in Iraq, it is possible that most of the world, and far too many Americans, will draw the wrong lesson on this final point as well. ■

What we should have known.

History Lesson

BY MARTIN PERETZ

IT WAS DURING the 1930s that the director-general of the Iraqi Ministry of Education addressed an assembly of schoolboys with the message that "the nation which does not excel in the manufacture of death with iron and fire will be forced to die under the hoofs of horses and the boots of foreign soldiers." Iraq did excel in the manufacture of death—brilliantly. But, aside from its pathetic excursions against Israel in 1948, 1967, and 1973, and Saddam Hussein's disastrous eight-year war against Iran in the 1980s, Iraq's power of mass murder was riveted mostly on its indigenous populations. As Elie Kedourie points out in his magisterial essay, "The Kingdom of Iraq: A Retrospect" (a chapter in his newly reissued collection, *The Chatham House Version and Other Middle Eastern Studies*), the erstwhile Iraqi monarchy, comprising Sunnis installed by the British in 1921, celebrated its full independence a decade later with "a massacre of the Assyrians carried out by the Iraqi army."

That fate was not reserved only for the Assyrian Christians. Soon, the almost powerless Shia majority; the Kurds, who are not Arabs but constituted the second-most populous group in the country; the Turkmen; the Jews, who, until their expulsion in 1951, were actually a plurality in Baghdad; the cross-denominational Yezidis; and other irrepressible tribes all underwent similar experiences. The British sometimes used air power to assist in the subjugation of those who did not want to live under the rule of a Sunni king and who resisted the idea that Iraq should be the center of a Sunni-based pan-Arabism. Something had to give, and, in the end, it was the king—who gave his life.

And what a regicide it was! The grisly end of the monarchy in 1958, with the slaying of the royal family and the murder of the prime minister—who, caught fleeing on the street in female attire, had his body shredded by the mob—was a prophecy of the brutality to come. This was not a fundamental change in Iraqi governance. It was a change of face, but the aims were even more brutal, and the ways turned out to be even more ruthless. The model was first Nazi, then Stalinist. In the Arab world, there are the monarchies and then there are the revolutionary republics, always in mobilization, always tending toward the totalitarian: Saddam's Iraq, vanguard but dynastic Syria, Qaddafi's almost comic-book rule in Libya, genocidal Sudan, and Algeria, the mythic jewel in the crown of national liberation and of the "nonaligned" that turned out to be fake—a killer dictatorship like the other Third World revolutions that engaged the ardors of idealistic Western youth four and five decades ago.

AMID ITS SANGUINARY history lies the uncomfortable truth that Iraq was not ever, and is not now, a nation or a nation-state. Saddam's pretensions to national and pan-Arab grandeur were enforced solely by his regime's competence—it's the only real one—in the manufacture of death. The polity that he and the Baath party ruled with such cruelty faithfully echoed Mesopotamia's savage past. Those who shed the most blood with the least scruples come out on top—that is what the history of Iraq teaches. So Saddam inflicted a sullen silence on his divided enemies: silence or death. It should therefore be not at all surprising that, when Saddam was toppled, Iraq's historically warring factions would take up their old positions—this time against both their traditional adversaries, whom they hate, and their liberators, whom they, at a minimum, do not trust.

Alas, we Americans do not naturally look to history for cautionary lessons about the future. Had we done that, our post-Saddam expectations would have been different. But we didn't, and so we couldn't anticipate that the various peoples of Iraq, understandably apprehensive about anyone in power, would not take our good intentions for granted. Nor did George W. Bush have the appetite to question whether he was leading the country and our hearty band of willing allies into a straight-out struggle for

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Iraqi freedom or a more costly and more intricate meliorist mission—his is not an especially inquiring mind. More significantly, America had been spoiled by the ease of the interventions in Bosnia and Afghanistan, which may have seduced us into expecting nothing less in Iraq. (No doubt, this later triumph also focused the Syrian and Iranian dictatorships on what their fate might be in a post-Saddam future, but now, hearing the anti-Bush, antiwar clamor, they must be breathing more easily.)

Of course, in a way, the United States had been preparing itself for this conflict for some time. That is why it associated itself with Iraqi democrats, inside and outside the country, for more than a decade before the 2003 invasion. It is also why, in 1998, Congress passed the Iraq Liberation Act, which called for the overthrow of Saddam (although, predictably, President Clinton did nothing to give the law effect). The spirit of the brave Iraqi dissenters was encompassed in a document called Charter 91 (a reference to the Czech liberation movement Charter 77), which was drafted by Kanan Makiya (well-known to NEW REPUBLIC readers) and signed by many others. It begins with a stunning Jeffersonian declaration: "People have rights for no other reason than that they exist as individual human beings." It continues: "Rebuilding civil society means elevating the principle of toleration into a new public norm soaring above all ideologies." To be sure, our Iraqi friends appear to have exaggerated to us their strength in the country—perhaps purposefully, perhaps because many of them, being long in exile, had lost intimate contact with the realities of the country they loved—and we have paid in weakened credibility. But there is no dearth of Iraqis who believe in the principles of Charter 91: the secularists, the feminists, the pious but tolerant Sunni and Shia, the Christians, the Kurds. Whatever America's errors of commission or omission, in battle and since, these are our axiomatic allies.

Unfortunately, given the demography and cartography of the country, our natural comrades are simply not enough. We will have to make accommodations with less tolerant groups. Iraq's final constitution will be less Jeffersonian than Charter 91—or even the existing constitution, which is already being modified. But surely it is a victory for our ultimate intentions that the thuggish Shia theologian Moqtada Al Sadr seems to have been persuaded that the present government he had relentlessly "mocked," as *The New York Times* put it, is the best he can hope for. If his Mahdi "army" stops shooting, the active resistance to the new order, however imperfect, will be left to the old Baathists and their more zealous Sunni confreres—a minority of a minority, more fearful of the Shia they had oppressed for generations than they are of the Americans. Still, they can cause much pain to the whole country. Their modus operandi, after all, is not just targeting foreigners or, for that matter, government officials and Iraqi men in uniform. Their favored tactics are to detonate explosives in a marketplace or to bomb a school bus, murdering civilians of any and all persuasions indiscriminately, the way of Islamist terrorism everywhere. Chaos makes everyone the prey of its perpetrators; it is the evil tyranny of the few.

SOME CRITICS, CITING public opinion polls in Iraq that supposedly show a nostalgia for the Saddam era, maintain that it is the obstruction of more than a few keeping Iraq from democracy. Indeed, there are those who believe that Iraqis do not really aspire to democracy at all. And one recent visitor to Iraq told me that our soldiers—perhaps because many are women—are having difficulties bonding with ordinary Iraqis. Maybe this should raise questions, in the words of one expert in Middle Eastern history, as to whether "we can ever build a functioning and truly reciprocal relationship with an Arab country."

Still, the Iraqis cannot really want to live under the kind of brute force from which the allies have freed them. (Nostalgia for tyrannies is not uncommon in history, but it represents only fear of a less structured future.) Many of those leftish critics of the administration's venture in Iraq who question this are simply hypocrites, for an ostensible cornerstone of their belief system is that all humankind shares a desire—nay, a *need*—for freedom and opportunity. Iraq was a country that could have materially provided this to its people. Only the rapacious dictatorship, buttressed by nepotism, prevented them from having it. Simply because of their Muslim "heresy," for example, hundreds of thousands of Shia whom the legendary traveler Wilfred Thesiger dubbed the "marsh Arabs" were deported from their immemorial living space, and that space was made arid, an enormity comparable to Soviet displacements of persecuted ethnic and national groups. This war—which has finally opened the possibilities for men and women to speak what they think, to read what they want, to earn a living in the ways in which they are capable, to live where their roots are, and, ultimately, to share in the enormous natural wealth of the country—is therefore a just war.

But, say the critics, this war is also wrong because it has absorbed energy and resources that ought to have been expended on other ventures. This, too, is more than slightly hypocritical. They argue simultaneously that we have not finished our righteous labors in Afghanistan because of the Iraq enmeshment and that we have shortchanged our military deployment in Iraq by tens of thousands of troops. But, with our straitened force capacity, which war do they want us to fight? Moreover, why is a war in Afghanistan more important, or more righteous, than one in Iraq? And what did war critics Sandy Berger and Madeleine Albright do when the situation in Afghanistan begged for U.S. action during their tenures? Virtually nothing.

The critics further contend that the fixation on Iraq detracts from American efforts in the war against terrorism and has pushed our allies into indifference. What more do these scolds think we should do against the great dread? (I have some ideas, but I am reasonably sure that these folk would find them insufficiently respectful of civil liberties.) In the meantime, no one has complained about, say, France

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or Spain, Germany or Morocco being insufficiently cooperative in the anti-terrorism project. It's only logical: These countries are in at least as much peril as we are—and, given the growing Muslim population in Europe, perhaps more. Saudi Arabia is a separate case, and it has been coddled by the Bush administration—by both Bush administrations, in fact. (Saddam was not displaced in the Gulf war in large measure due to George H.W. Bush's solicitude for the House of Saud.) But Riyadh, too, has felt the tremors of explosive fanaticism. If it doesn't cooperate in the war on terrorism, it will be committing suicide.

Finally, critics maintain that the United States needs to rivet its attention on the danger of an already nuclear-empowered North Korea, and indeed it does. But what coercive power do they propose we use? Indeed, our engagement with North Korea would seem to be an example of the cooperation they crave. Instead of going it alone against that country, the United States has wisely involved the Russians, the Chinese, the South Koreans, and the Japanese. These countries—which, after all, are North Korea's neighbors—have at least as much at stake as we do in denuclearizing the country. Why is multilateralism inappropriate here when it is demanded on almost everything else?

Indeed, the most persistent criticism of the Iraq war is that the Bush administration did not secure the approval of the Security Council and, therefore, it went into battle without the legitimizing caresses of the United Nations. Given the fact that France and Russia had spent the past decade undermining the sanctions, I believe there was no chance that either Paris or Moscow would have approved any military effort against the Baghdad regime. And, now that we have been forced by circumstances on the ground to engage the United Nations, we have paid an unspoken price—namely, that the various militias will not be disarmed, at least not yet. (The standing army of a sovereign state does not easily tolerate competing irregulars. There is an armed battle waiting to rage.)

In the meantime, the United Nations itself is not anxious to put its personnel or declining prestige at risk—an echo of its indifference to events in the former Yugoslavia and the genocide of epochal dimensions in Rwanda. Much of this inaction is directly attributable to Kofi Annan. Right now, another vast genocide is taking place in Sudan, with Muslims killing Christians and Arab Muslims killing African Muslims. The United Nations has merely wrung its hands. There are roughly 10,000 U.N. peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. When a rapacious mob entered the town of Bukavu, the blue helmets simply dissolved into the bush. In both Sudan and the Congo, it would not take much to enforce a separation between the warring bands. But who will put their men in harm's way for the sake of African lives? No one. Certainly nothing will be done without the Americans. But, for the moment, the Americans are otherwise engaged, putting their lives at risk in a faraway country about which we know not as much as we should. It is an honorable undertaking. ■

Why I still have hope.

People Power

BY THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN

SINCE IRAQ STARTED spinning out of control in April, many supporters and opponents of the war have been pronouncing definitively one way or another: I was wrong. I was right. It's over. Lord knows, I have been tempted by all those sentiments at different times in recent months. But I haven't been willing to pull the trigger one way or another because I still don't feel that the three fundamental questions I had going into this war have been answered. This means a decent outcome—that is, one that tilts Iraq from a country threatening its neighbors and its own people toward a more benign, stable entity that at least allows its people to plan their own future and to develop their potential—is still possible.

Before the war in Iraq started, I argued that Iraq was a black box that had been sealed shut for more than 30 years of Baathist rule. We did not know what was inside, and we would know only after we broke the locks. As such, two questions tugged at me: First, is Iraq the Arab Germany or the Arab Yugoslavia? Is it a country of great natural resources and human talent, caught in the grip of a warped dictator? If we removed the dictator, could the country eventually be normalized and flourish? Or, is Iraq a totally artificial colonial construct that has never congealed—with Kurds, Sunnis, Shia, Turkmen, Assyrians, et cetera, all forced to live together against their will? If it is, such a country is only governable by a Tito-like iron fist—and, once we remove the Baathist iron fist, we would inevitably have to replace it with an American one.

The second question I had was: Was Iraq the way Iraq was because Saddam Hussein was the way Saddam Hussein was—a megalomaniacal fascist who made life in his country nasty, brutish, and short, and who diverted much of Iraq's resources to weaponry and palaces? Or was Saddam Hussein the way Saddam Hussein was because Iraq was the way Iraq was—a congenitally fractured society that could only be held together by a murderous thug? In short, did Saddam make Iraq, or did Iraq make Saddam?

Having been to Iraq three times since the war ended, I still don't have definitive answers, because the only way to answer these two big questions is for the United States to create enough security in Iraq for the will of Iraq's silent majority to manifest itself. A secure environment where Iraqis could look in the mirror and ask themselves for the first time, "Who are we? Who do we want to be?" has simply not been achieved.

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WILL WE EVER get these two fundamental questions answered? At this stage, given what the United States has been willing and unwilling, able and unable to do in Iraq, it now all depends on their answer to my third question: How will Iraqis react when they are handed the keys of sovereignty by the United States on June 30? Since American forces have neither the legitimacy nor the numbers to finish the war and truly secure Iraq, the only possible alternative force to do that is the new Iraqi government and whatever military might it is able to muster (backed up, no doubt, by whatever U.S. forces the new Iraqi government feels it can summon without sacrificing its legitimacy). The only way to secure Iraq today is to uncover, destroy, or deter the die-hard Baathists who have been attacking U.S. forces and Iraqi police units, and the Al Qaeda sympathizers who have filtered into the country from Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, Kuwait, and Europe to conduct suicide bombings and wreak havoc. I don't believe non-Arabic speaking U.S. troops can get to the root of either problem. Only Iraqis can do that. The third question, therefore, is whether they will have the will to do so once they are given the way—once they are given the keys to Iraq.

My own reporting in Iraq leaves me feeling torn. On the upside, I found a country with a lot more intermarriage, intermingling of ethnic and religious groups, and Iraqi national identity than I expected. Iraq may become Lebanon on steroids when we leave, but it is not there yet. Partly this is due to the U.S. military presence, but it is also partly due to the fact that most Iraqis desperately do not want to go there. On the downside, I was shocked at how devastated Iraq was from three decades of Saddam's misrule and the last ten years of sanctions—a devastation compounded by Donald Rumsfeld's cavalier attitude toward postwar looting. Iraq looked to me like Babylon with electricity poles. And that leads to another unpleasant surprise—what Christopher Hitchens aptly called "the extent of lumpen Islamization in Iraq, on both the Khomeinist and Wahhabi ends." Under the secular patina of Baathist rule in Baghdad, there is a lot more Tehran and Riyadh in the backstreets and among the urban youth there than anyone knew. This is not easy clay.

So where does all this leave me? There were always two ways to fight this war: One was to come in big, like empire-builders—lots of troops, lots of patience—and transform Iraq over a decade. The other was to come in small, break open the black box, dump out the contents onto the sidewalk, and see what Iraqis would make of it. The Bush team, to the extent that it even thought this through beforehand, chose the latter strategy, and it's too late to change now. That doesn't mean all is lost. It just means Iraq's future will be determined by what's now on the sidewalk—by who Iraqis tell us they are and who they want to be. They still don't know, so surely we can't. We assumed that Saddam's regime could not possibly be the expression of their collective will and identity. If, after they get the keys, they fail to produce an answer, or, worse, collapse into civil war, we will have to take precautions against them. If they succeed, we will applaud. There was way too much hubris a year ago in predicting easy success. Let's avoid a similar hubris today in predicting certain failure.

As for the enterprise as a whole, all I can say is this: The two Arab Human Development reports quantified something that any casual newspaper reader in the last two years could tell—that the Arab-Muslim world is badly tilting in the wrong direction. And the September 11, Bali, Madrid, Istanbul, Tunisia, Morocco, Riyadh, and Khobar attacks by Muslim extremists all underscore how dangerous this is for Muslim civilization and for the world. Once it was clear to me that the Bush team had chosen a warpath, I wanted to see it done in a way that maximized the chances for a decent outcome in Iraq that could help tilt the Arab-Muslim world onto a more positive slope. And "tilt," for me, was the right word, not "transform." Only we can tilt the playing field, but only Iraqis can take advantage of that by transforming their own society and politics—and that takes a generation.

I believed that such an audacious project required so much better planning, so much more patience, and so many more resources than the Bush team devoted. Nevertheless, we are where we are and there is still, despite it all, the possibility of a decent outcome—depending largely on what Iraqis do.

AS FOR THE critics of this whole enterprise, let me simply say this: I am ready to believe that, because we went to Iraq, there is a war on terrorists elsewhere that we are not fighting. You'd have to prove it, but I can believe it. But I know one thing for certain: There is no war on terrorism—which is to say no war on the ideas of intolerance and hatred that spurred the boys of September 11 and their successors to act—that does not get at the issues of Arab governance and misgovernance laid out in the Arab Human Development reports. I never believed that Saddam possessed any WMD that could threaten us, and I never believed his alleged WMD was a legitimate rationale for going to war in Iraq. Saddam was always deterrable by conventional means—because he loved life more than he hated us. I did believe, though, in the importance of regime change and reform across the region, because I always believed that what threatens us most from the Arab-Muslim world were the "people of mass destruction"—the PMDs—produced by failing Arab states. These PMDs are undeterrable because they hate us more than they love life. These are young Muslim men and women ready to commit suicide, spurred by their own humiliation at how far behind the rest of the world their civilization has fallen and by bad ideas—ideas of intolerance, anti-pluralism, and anti-modernism, produced in a cauldron of misgovernance and religious obscurantism.

People who are ready to commit suicide using instruments from our daily lives—the car, the airplane, the tennis

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shoe—are a fundamental threat to open societies because they attack the trust that is needed to keep an open society open. The only way to protect open societies against these forces—short of building a wall—is to find a way to partner with moderate forces in the Arab-Muslim world to tilt it in another direction so that societies there can start to deliver more hope and opportunities for their people and so that different ideas can get a hearing and, one day, prevail. Only Arabs and Muslims can restrain their own.

Maybe trying to tilt Iraq in a different direction to help tilt the entire region will turn out to be a fool's errand. I would argue that it's still too soon to tell. When will we know? If Iraq collapses into civil war or the new Iraqi government proves incapable of organizing reasonably fair elections, this enterprise will rightly be seen as a failure. By contrast, if Iraqis come together around this new government, enough to produce a reasonably fair election and put Iraq on course for some kind of decent federal system of government, this enterprise will rightly be seen as pivotal and positive. We just have to let it play out and influence it as best we can, where we can.

But there is one thing I am as sure of today as I was a year ago, and it is this: Thinking that there is a war on terrorists that doesn't also involve a war on the roots of terrorism was a dangerous illusion on September 11 and remains a dangerous illusion today. ■

Five lessons from a bad year.

Learned

BY PAUL BERMAN

ONE: WE HAVE learned that Saddam Hussein's Baathist dictatorship was just as bad as everyone said, and worse. We have learned about the 300,000 Shia killed after the 1991 war, the perhaps 30,000 people buried in a single grave, the 40,000 marsh Arabs killed, the millions of refugees, and so forth—mass destruction with and without weapons of mass destruction. We have learned about the survivors. In Baghdad, a woman schoolteacher approached George Packer of *The New Yorker* and said, "Please, sir, can you help me? ... I must work with Americans, because my psychology is demolished by Saddam Hussein. Not just me. All Iraqis. Psychological demolition."

We have certainly learned that most Iraqis do not say, "I must work with Americans." But we have learned about psychological demolition. We have learned that victims are not always attractive—hardly a new lesson. We have learned that hundreds of political parties have sprouted up, not because democracy is in bloom, but because people have no idea how to proceed. And, so, they attend the sermons of Moqtada Al Sadr, who stands before his congregants dressed in a shroud, in order to prepare his flock to go where he intends to lead them.

We have learned a lesson about social conscience in the modern age—and this, too, is hardly new. In the twentieth century, crimes on the hugest scale took place in the open, yet somehow, through the alchemies of political ideology, the crimes were rendered invisible and thus were allowed to continue unimpeded. This has been Iraq's experience precisely. Saddam launched his slaughters 25 years ago, and, in the Western countries, everyone knew, yet most people managed not to see, and no one ever succeeded in organizing a truly mass protest.

A truly large and powerful protest movement took to the streets all over the Western world only in February 2003—and this was not to denounce the terrible dictatorship, but to prevent an invasion from overthrowing the terrible dictatorship. Those were the largest mass protests in the history of the world. Some of the protesters marched in a mood of cautious practicality, fearful that overthrowing Saddam might unleash still worse horrors, or might undermine the manhunt for Al Qaeda. But there was also in those marches, and in the larger mood of the moment, an unmistakable moral fervor—an outraged feeling that invading Iraq was a criminal act.

Some of the protesters invoked "just war" theory. In "just war" theory, to invade a country in order to stop massacres currently underway is deemed perfectly just. But to send in armies to rescue the survivors after the massacres have ended is deemed unjust. The marchers in 2003 gazed at Iraq and saw plainly enough that massacres had come to an end. (And logically so: The survivors had already been clubbed into submission, and no Iraqi was going to rise in rebellion ever again.) And the marchers therefore swelled in moral indignation.

Some of the protesters invoked the authority of the United Nations. The United Nations was founded in 1945 in a spirit of anti-Nazism, in order to struggle against every kind of racist and totalitarian state that might reflect Nazi or Nazi-like influences. This has always been a source of the U.N.'s singular prestige. The Baath party, on the other hand, was founded in 1943 (originally in Damascus) in a spirit of pro-Nazism, in order to adapt the racist and totalitarian ideas of Europe for the Arab world. The whole purpose of the United Nations, from a 1945 point of view, is to rid the world of parties like the Baath.

But the United Nations is also a parliament of states, eager to protect its members from one another. In 2003, the United Nations had to choose between humanitarianism and the sanctity of borders? The United Nations chose. And, all over the world, people came to look on the invasion as a terrible wrong yet again—an affront to the moral legitimacy of the parliament of states.

And how did the peace marchers react, afterward, to the

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mass graves and other discoveries? The abstract principles of "just war" and U.N. legitimacy pressed on one side of the balance and the human realities of extreme suffering pressed on the other. And the abstractions were found to be weightier. That is a main reason why a number of wealthy countries around the world have declined to send aid to the suffering Iraqis, even though everyone can now see how desperate are the needs. It is a matter of principle.

TWO: WE HAVE learned that, in northern Iraq, the Kurds, for all their suffering (the genocide and gassings of 1988, the 4,000 villages destroyed, the million refugees, et cetera), have nonetheless put together a fairly healthy society, duly appointed with viable opposition parties and newspapers and even wise leaders. These successes owe something to Kurdistan's difference from the rest of Iraq. In the rest of Iraq, the ideological legacy of the Baath party has proved to be lamentably hardy, even among people who were fervent enemies of the Baath—a legacy of anti-liberalism, conspiracy theories, and racist hatreds.

But the Kurds were always an object of Baathist hatred. And this may have permitted the Kurdish provinces to shuck off the larger ideology with relative ease. Then, too, the Kurds have benefited from 13 years of military intervention by U.S. and British forces (and even by the French, at the start). America is an impatient country, but not always, it turns out, and this is good news.

And so, during this last year we have learned that people who smirk at putting the words "liberal democracy" and "Iraq" into a single sentence ought to reduce their smirk by 20 percent, in proportion to Iraq's Kurdish population. We have learned that, in Kurdistan, the democratic left has turned out to be especially strong. And we have learned that, in some of the world's liberal democracies, other democratic leftists couldn't care less. "They shall not pass" was the slogan of the left in the Spanish Civil War. "Yes, they will," is the slogan of Spanish socialism today. Iraqi success, as much as Iraqi suffering, turns out to be invisible in the modern world.

THREE: WE HAVE learned there are many paths to hell, and one of those paths is called the "National Security Strategy" of 2002. This is the White House document that affirmed U.S. hegemony over everyone else as the national goal and preemptive war as the policy—two ideas that were guaranteed to strike terror in half the world. The statement affirmed, "For most of the 20th century, the world was divided by a great struggle over ideas: destructive totalitarian visions versus freedom and equality. That great struggle is over"—which, in regard to the Muslim world, is simply not the case.

Yet, this most wrongheaded of national security strategies expressed the mentality that governed the invasion—the hubris and the indifference toward waging a battle of ideas. A good many people always dreaded the probable effect of this set of attitudes, and I'm reassured to see, when I glance back at my own writings and statements from the weeks before the invasion, that I, too, warned against Bush's approach. I participated in a NEW REPUBLIC symposium very much like this present exercise early in March 2003, and I howled piteously about the president's rhetoric, ignorance, and Hobbesian brutishness, and concluded by declaring myself "terrified" at the dangers he was courting—terrified that American power, stripped of liberal principles, was going to end up as no power at all ("Resolved," March 3, 2003).

And then, like everyone else who had issued a few warnings, I had to figure out what to do when these warnings turned out to be on the mark. I responded by devoting most of this past year to composing op-eds, conference papers, Q&As, and statements of every shape and size, and lobbing these things into the pages of newspapers and magazines in some 15 or 20 countries in a one-man campaign to minimize whatever sorry consequences the National Security Strategy and sundry related White House policies might be having on world opinion and events in Iraq.

I tried to persuade people that severe oppression justifies intervention, no matter what other explanations Bush may have offered; that Baathism and radical Islam are extremist movements with a visible link to European fascism and have worked together to achieve their shared ideal, the human bomb; that a great struggle over totalitarian ideas is precisely the issue in Iraq; that Muslim liberals do exist in both Iraq and Afghanistan (though I am willing to be tolerantly flexible about the definition of liberalism, under the circumstances), and merit our support; that liberalism's gain will be terrorism's loss; and that every country in the liberal democratic world has a role to play, even if certain passages in the damnable National Security Strategy might suggest otherwise.

This, you may say, has surely been a quixotic way to spend a year. But, in distributing these opinions to the world, I have learned one more thing, which is that, in spite of everything you may have heard, opinions like these do enjoy some support, here and there, even among the journalists and intellectuals of Western Europe. I suppose the White House itself has become dimly aware of the appeal of these arguments. The president's speeches have certainly taken to beating an anti-totalitarian tattoo lately, which you would never have predicted from his National Security Strategy or his initial justifications for the war in Iraq.

Some of his speeches have been rather good. I would have applauded him at the Air Force Academy in early June. He laid out a more coherent explanation of the Iraq war than ever before. But these speeches have had no impact. It is because they have come too late, and people don't know whether to take Bush's words seriously anymore, and because the newspapers don't even print these speeches (a big mistake, on their part). Anyway, as a recent convert to the cause of idealism against totalitarianism, the president can never seem to get his new message entirely right. He

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goes on about World War II and the early cold war. But the obvious place to begin, if he wants to undo his old errors, is to speak about the principles and lessons of Kosovo.

The people I have encountered around the world who root for liberal victories in Iraq tend to be the very people who dragged their various countries into the Kosovo war. The White House might pause to reflect that reconstructing the alliance of 1999 ought to be a lot easier to do than reconstructing the alliances that defeated fascism in 1945 or formed to combat communism in 1949. But Bush is not going to sing the virtues of the Kosovo war—or has he changed his mind about this, too? In my one-man campaign, therefore, I have thrown in a few extra points, touching on Bush—a few remarks to acknowledge that America's president does make people cringe, and that, even so, in the wars presently taking place between liberalism and extremism in Iraq and Afghanistan, the liberals do need our aid. I have found that, in most places, the best way to call for solidarity is to begin by deploring the policies, character, rhetoric, culture, political tradition, and diplomacy of America's president. People become surprisingly open-minded if you begin this way.

To be honest, I have come to notice a weak point in arguments like mine. The weak point rests on a perhaps too-easy assumption that I have tended to make ever since the Kosovo war. This is the assumption that, regardless of a given president's views, the U.S. military can be counted on to be disciplined, professional, and reasonably skillful at the tasks of modern war. The U.S. military and its allies did seem to be pretty effective in Kosovo—even if the Air Force accidentally bombed the Chinese embassy. They seem to have done well enough in Afghanistan, too—though, maybe in Afghanistan, the other shoe has yet to drop. But the news from Iraq makes me wonder if President Bush's armed forces are the same armed forces that used to operate so skillfully under (the slitted eyes of tough-guy readers widen in horror) President Clinton. Military professionals can't outperform their commanders back in Washington, I suppose.

FOUR: I AM dreading what some people claim already to have learned from the blunders in Iraq. Even now, some people are saying: You see! There's no point in overthrowing dictators by force! (Though many dictators have been forcibly overthrown, to good effect—from Germany to Afghanistan.) And no point in trying to do good for anyone else! (Though humanitarian intervention has had its successes, from Kosovo to East Timor, not to mention Kurdistan.)

The U.S. failure in Somalia led to a different kind of U.S. failure in Rwanda. There will surely be Rwandas in the future—there is one right now in Darfur, Sudan (where the ethnic cleansers come out of the same mix of radical Islamism and Arab nationalism that has caused so much suffering in many other places, including our own places). Who in his right mind is going to call for U.S. intervention? Doubtless, in the future, when things are not so grim for us, some people will, in fact, call for U.S. interventions, and justly so. And yet, other people are going to say, Oh, right, and let's put Donald Rumsfeld in charge. And this will be a devastating reply.

FIVE: WE HAVE learned that F. Scott Fitzgerald's axiom—about intelligence as the ability to hold in mind two contradictory thoughts at the same time—has a corollary in the field of emotion. Sometimes you also have to hold in your heart two contradictory emotions. This is difficult. To understand Saddam Hussein and the history of modern Iraq, you have to feel anger—or else you have understood nothing.

But what if, in addition to feeling anger at Saddam (and at Sadr in his shroud, and at Mussab Al Zarqawi with his knife, and at Saddam's army, which was organizing suicide terrorists even before the invasion), you have also come to feel more than a little anger at George W. Bush? What if you gaze at events in Iraq and say to yourself: Things did not have to be this way. We could have presented a human rights case to the world, instead of trying to deceive people about weapons and conspiracies—and we would have ended up with more allies, or, at least, with allies who understood the mission.

We could have applied the lessons of Kosovo, which would have meant dispatching a suitable number of soldiers. We could have protected the government buildings and the National Museum, and we could have co-opted Saddam's army—further lessons from Kosovo. We could have believed Saddam when he threatened to wage a guerrilla war in Baghdad. We could have prepared in advance to broadcast TV shows that Iraqis wanted to watch. We could have observed the Geneva Conventions. (What humiliation in having to write such a sentence!) We could have—but I will stop, in order to ask: What if, in mulling these thoughts, you find that angry emotions toward George W. Bush are seeping upward from your own patriotic gut?

Here is the challenge: to rage at Saddam and other enemies, and, at the same time, to rage in a somewhat different register at Bush, and to keep those two responses in proper proportion to one another. That can be a difficult thing to do, requiring emotional balance, maturity, and analytic clarity—a huge effort.

It is said that Bush should have asked America as a whole to make large efforts and sacrifices—and not just the soldiers and civilian workers who have put themselves in danger. The complaint is unfair. Bush has asked a great deal of America. He has asked us to draw on our emotional balance, maturity, and analytic clarity: the qualities that are needed to help us distinguish our feelings about the enemy from our feelings about the commander in chief. To distinguish between outright hatred and a certain kind of contempt. And so we have learned how to do this—the final thing we have learned during this past year. And we will have to go on learning how to do this, perhaps for a few months, perhaps for a few years. ■

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Beyond Convention

QUIETLY, ALMOST POLITELY, English film-makers have in recent years been developing a sub-genre in social heterodoxy. These films do not break convention, they ignore it completely. Two instances: Stephen Poliakoff's *Close My Eyes*, about a man who accepts his wife's affair with her brother; Anthony Harvey's *Richard's Things*, about a widow who discovers that her lately deceased husband had a mistress, seeks the mistress out in curiosity, and eventually has an affair with her. Common characteristics of this sub-genre are that the acting is spotless and that the directing too has a neatness about it, as if the film-maker wanted to emphasize the bizarreness of the story by presenting it in an especially acceptable context.

THE MOTHER
(Sony Pictures Classics)

TIME OF THE WOLF
(Palm Pictures)

Now here is **THE MOTHER**, which follows the affair that a widow in her sixties has with her daughter's boyfriend. The screenplay is by Hanif Kureishi, who, since *My Beautiful Laundrette*, has been a considerable presence in British film. Kureishi likes subjects that many might call wild but that he treats in appealing terms without taming them. He could hardly have dared more than he does here. (I may subsequently regret having said that.)

Roger Michell directed. He made *Notting Hill*, the Julia Roberts–Hugh Grant vehicle that was an adequately packaged product. The key to his directing of *The Mother* is that he didn't essentially change styles. He didn't brace himself for oddity; he simply directed this film as if it were about just another subject. Indeed, the only difference from *Notting Hill* in this regard is that the new film looks even more domestic, or domesticated. Michell engaged the production designer Mark Tildesley, who made every room in the film especially tasteful in the current English manner. Sometimes a few chairs and a table, themselves sleek, are posed against a dark, solid-color wall. Even more frequently Michell, along with his cinematographer Alwin Küchler, composes shots like salon photography: every object—a vase of flowers, a book, whatever—is meant to partake of the space and to contribute to the mood. Michell also likes to slit characters vertically. Sometimes one of the people in a shot is only half in it, making it seem that the frame is only part of what is going on: the world outside continues to be the world. The film takes place for the most part in London, and Michell moves his people around the city in a way that discloses it, much as Sidney Lumet has done with New York. It would be very easy to make a book of impressive photographs from the frames of this film.

All these elements, along with an acutely recorded sound track, are intended to keep us from thinking that we are at an experimental venture. The very texture of the film insists that this story is figuratively in our society and is only one instance of extraordinary human behavior in that society. *The Mother* is not meant to uncover an endemic sexual secret. It simply tries to testify to possibilities that we may not think are possible.

At the start May and her husband are an unexceptional middle-class couple in their sixties who go to London to visit their daughters, one of whom is married and the other apparently divorced, both with children. May's husband dies suddenly of a heart attack, and she stays with Paula, the divorcée. Construction is going on in Paula's house, in the hands of the thirtyish Darren, with whom Paula is having—in her view anyway—a serious affair. (To keep things complex, Darren is married and has a son.)

May likes Darren, and they become friends. Eventually impulses that she no longer cherished begin to stir in her. She makes the opening moves toward him, and Darren accepts. She is not attractive in any physical way—she calls herself "a shapeless old lump," which is an exaggeration though not a lie—but he responds to her, apparently out of curiosity. Perhaps, too, he gets a charge out of sleeping with his girlfriend's mother, despite her age. Unaware of the May-Darren encounters, Paula fixes up a date for her mother with an elderly man, and an unpleasant bedding occurs. After a time, however—not a very long time—Paula learns about Darren and her mother. (This happens through Kureishi's one arrant mechanism. May likes to sketch, and she has done some highly erotic sketches of herself and Darren. It is unlikely that she would have left her sketchbook on a table where Paula could find it.) Explosions follow. At the finish, May, after her revisit to younger life, is reconciled to the inevitable. The future of her relationship with her family is left open. But she has had a stay from exile into age.

Affairs between older women and younger men are not new in films—witness Hal Ashby's *Harold and Maude* and Rainer Fassbinder's *Fear Eats the Soul*. But those stories didn't have all the complications of *The Mother*. This film holds and convinces, even evokes empathy, because of Anne Reid, an actress long experienced in British television and film. She gives May intelligence and spirit and a somewhat genteel wonder at the resurging of desire. Reid helps us to understand May's behavior. Darren is played by Daniel Craig, who was Ted Hughes in *Sylvia* and is still burning. And, as noted, the director and designer of the film have provided a texture that encloses it in seriousness and weight.

The disturbingly gifted Austrian writer-director Michael Haneke has made his own small-scale apocalypse. As he showed in *Funny Games* and even more starkly in *The Piano Teacher*, he wants to abrade us, to force our focus on the discomfiting. His ideas have been so over-

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whelming and his directing so skilled that, especially in *The Piano Teacher*, he made us accept the impermissible.

His new film, **TIME OF THE WOLF**, is an allegory. No locale is named, no details are given, but a catastrophe has smitten the world. A youngish woman named Anne, her husband, and their two children have arrived at their weekend place in the country, seemingly to escape the catastrophe, and they find people in their house—refugees, not thieves, one of whom kills Anne's husband. She flees with her children, and they join a group of other refugees at a railroad station where the rest of the film takes place. All the people there are waiting for a train that may or may not come.

The group in the station is meant to be a microcosm of the human race in extreme crisis. Quarrels, petty and otherwise, erupt; hope rises and flickers as they wait. We never see a train arrive. The last shot is from the window of a moving train, but we don't know whether the train is on the way to the station or has stopped there for passengers or has raced on through. Haneke leaves the future of the human race ambiguous.

Or would have left it so if his allegory had worked. But the film is such a pat construction, so dingily shot in heavy light, so dependent on our cooperation without earning it, that we are more aware of the exercise than affected by it. After Haneke has put his people in a fraught situation, their interactions during their wait are insufficiently interesting. Several good actors are on hand, including Isabelle Huppert of *The Piano Teacher*, Olivier Gourmet of *The Son*, and Patrice Chéreau, the actor-director who made *Son Frère*. (Once again, this Austrian director has made a film in French.) But all the roles are so dimly outlined that the actors can hardly be said to give performances. Let's hope that in future Haneke will forgo symbolism and get back to making us realistically uncomfortable.

Royal slip. In *Troy* Brian Cox plays King Agamemnon, not (as stated here) King Menelaus. Sorry, sire. ■

DAVID HAJDU ON MUSIC

Where Has "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?" Gone?

WHAT IF THEY HAD AN anti-war movement and nobody came? For three nights at the end of April, a few politically conscious punk-rock bands from around the country passed through New York on a tour called Plea for Peace. Punk has included an element of political consciousness since the Clash strummed about the Troubles in the late 1970s, although in peacetime the good service of punks was to plead for anarchy. The entreating in the peace tour's first show at the Bowery Ballroom was appropriately harsh, loud, and vague: a deft quintet from Omaha called Cursive played a set of fierce and almost catchy songs, after which the leader of the tour, the musician and activist Mike Park, implored the audience to "stand up and take action" by registering to vote. A young woman standing near me was wearing a T-shirt silk-screened in pink with a photograph of the president and the words "Lick Bush," and another had a button with the slogan "Peace Not War" in logotype (that being the title of a CD compilation of recent songs protesting the Bush administration's military actions). The atmosphere had a positive charge of high voltage and a quality of connectedness to the world outside the decoratively rotting walls of the Bowery Ballroom that is unusual in the realm of punk these days. But it proved to be ethereal.

Outside the club, the conversations over cigarettes were on largely apolitical topics: bands, the imminent end of the school year, what bars to go to later. Around the neighboring streets of Manhattan's Lower East Side, no one in sight was accessorized in anti-war regalia; and in a taxi headed uptown that night, the radio played "Crazy in Love" by Beyoncé, "Yeah!" by Usher, and other hits of the week, none of which has lyrics dealing in any way with world affairs. This is popular culture just as George W. Bush likes it, wherein good citizens support the war by ignoring it.

TO RECALL THE ERA OF AMERica's last military venture roughly comparable to the Iraq war, by contrast, is to conjure a Time-Life Library of images of young people mobilized by protest music. Who can picture a peace symbol on the hood of a VW Beetle or a hand rising out of a tie-dyed shirt to give the "V" sign without the accompanying sound of Bob Dylan singing "Blowin' in the Wind" or John Lennon chanting "Give Peace a Chance"? Indeed, the pop music of the 1960s was so infused with anti-war (or pro-peace) sentiment that sociopolitical content became something of a Top Forty craze. Transistor radios squeaked with social consciousness, often explicit (Barry McGuire's "Eve of Destruction"), sometimes oblique (The Monkees' "Last Train to Clarksville"—the title city of which is near a major Army training base in Tennessee), frequently set to a dance beat for social application (The Temptations' "Ball of Confusion"). Artists in virtually every genre of popular music—except country and western, which was and remains a hostel for conservatism—recorded leftist "message" songs touching upon Vietnam, civil rights, or the general havoc of the time: Elvis Presley ("If I Can Dream"), Louis Armstrong (a cover of "Give Peace a Chance"), Jimmy Cliff ("Vietnam," which Bob Dylan called the best protest song he had ever heard), the art-rockers The Fugs ("Kill for Peace"), the bluesman L. B. Lenoir ("Vietnam Blues"), and innumerable others, well known and obscure. Bobby Darin, the 1950s rocker turned Vegas crooner who had proved his ability to re-cut his persona to match the musical fashion of the season, re-re-invented himself as a mustachioed, guitar-picking folkie and started singing original protest material such as "Simple Song of Freedom" and "Long Line Rider" under the name Bob Darin.

As everyone who was in the Bowery

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Ballroom that April night knows, there is no dearth of music addressing the Iraq war, the Bush administration's military policies, and related subjects. To the contrary, dozens of musicians, some long established and prominent, have recorded songs dealing with each of these topics in recent years. In addition to Mike Park's Plea for Peace, activist groups such as Bands Against Bush, Rock Against Bush, and Tell Us the Truth have staged tours of rock, pop, and folk artists both to incite civil dissent and to promote voter registration among audiences who are unlikely to vote Republican, and several of the organizations (including Plea for Peace and Rock Against Bush) have released or plan to make compilation CDs. The first double-CD set produced by Peace Not War includes thirty-two topical songs (some of them timely but not new, recycled for the CD) by many contemporary performers, among them "Son of a Bush," a pounding critique of both Bush presidencies by Public Enemy; "Nuclear War," a jazz-funk riff piece composed by the late Sun Ra and performed by Yo La Tengo; and "The Price of Oil," a melodic folk-rock number by Billy Bragg. But few of the tunes have had much airplay, and none has caught on with the public like "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?," "Blowin' in the Wind," or "Give Peace a Chance," all of which were hit singles (the first two in versions by Peter, Paul and Mary, the Monkees of 1960s protest) and seemed omnipresent in their day.

WHAT IS KEEPING THE NEW protest songs off the radio? Conspiracy theorists in the music trades, a plentiful lot who may be right as well as paranoid, blame Clear Channel for this (and for nearly every other failing in their business, with the possible exception of Janet Jackson's Super Bowl outfit). After all, the leviathan of commercial radio and concert promotion dominates pop listening through its ownership of more than a thousand stations across the country, along with performance venues in many of the same locations, and it is more entwined with Bush than the Saudis. About a year before the last presidential election, Tom Hicks, a broadcasting investor who later became a top executive at Clear Channel (which is based in San Antonio), bought Bush's interest in the Texas Rangers baseball franchise, providing the future president with one of the biggest paydays of his business career. Later, when the Bush administration rolled out its untested policy of pre-emptive assault, Clear Channel sponsored boosterish pro-war "Rally for America" events in eighteen cities. The FCC graciously suspended long-standing regulations restricting media ownership, freeing Clear Channel to extend its broadcasting empire further. Fearsome expansionists enriched through cronyism, contemptuous of the rules, and intolerant of competition, Clear Channel is to American pop-music outlets what the Bush administration is to the world stage.

At the same time, Clear Channel, which became notorious for replacing deejays with computer-driven playlists derived through test-listening, is a devoutly market-driven enterprise. If the young ears that tune in to Clear Channel's stations and purchase its concert tickets were to respond to Billy Bragg as they do to Britney Spears, would we all be growing sick of hearing "The Price of Oil" on every station of the car radio? (Survivors of the '60s may remember coming to feel the same way about "Blowin' in the Wind.") Would the heads of Clear Channel really ignore their audience to avoid offending the president? Or would they agree with him that the best of old friendships (such as America's with France) are secondary to one's self-interest?

QUITE A FEW ARTISTS WHO have recorded new protest songs have chosen not to release them on CD (at least not initially), but to post them on the Web for free downloading, end-running Clear Channel while forfeiting income. How well such records would sell in today's marketplace remains unknown. The list of acts who have done this includes Billie Joe Armstrong of Green Day ("Life During Wartime," which is not the Talking Heads song), the Beastie Boys ("In a World Gone Mad..."), Paula Cole ("My Hero, Mr. President!"), Michael Franti and Spearhead ("Bomb the World"), Lenny Kravitz ("We Want Peace"), John Mellencamp ("To Washington"), R.E.M. ("The Final Straw"), and System of a Down ("Boom!"). Thurston Moore, the guitarist for Sonic Youth, has started a Web clearinghouse for downloading topical songs.

The songs themselves are a ragged litter, related mainly in their lyrical enmity for the Bush administration, the Iraq war, or war as a whole. Since American protest music grew out of the blues and rural folk song (vernacular expressions of the discontent of subjugated and disenfranchised people), it was historically an earthy music, sung or talk-sung in natural voices accompanied by inexpensive, portable stringed instruments. When the left took up folksinging as a way to rally working people in the years after the Depression, the best-used songs were sing-along anthems of protest or solidarity: simple, memorable, and repetitive tunes such as "Worried Man Blues" and "Oh, Freedom." Several of the recent topical songs draw heavily upon those traditions, and their folk-rock spinoff of the 1960s. Mellencamp's cracker-barrel grouse is near mimicry of Woody Guthrie, down to the emphasis on the final syllable of "Washing-TON," and the topical songs by Billy Bragg, John Lester ("Out of the Clear Blue Sky"), and Seize the Day ("United States") could have been done by Phil Ochs and Tom Paxton at the Newport Folk Festival in 1964, with a little tweaking. Ani DiFranco's "Self Evident" is a rambling mostly a capella rant—a talking blues without the blues. Otherwise, most of the new songs are wholly in the vein of the artists' usual work, but with lyrics fixed on the military battlefield rather than the interpersonal one. They are idiosyncratic and individualistic works, inappropriate for group singing. As such, they do not represent a revival of the protest-song tradition so much as its death. Appropriated, transformed, and absorbed into other styles, protest becomes a functional element of the music and no longer its elemental function.

There is a tentative quality to some of the recent topical music—and to the way the contemporary audience has responded to it. In SuparNovar's "When R They Gonna C," the lyrics touch upon the war almost in passing, and the writer's passion on the subject seems uncertain. Chumbawumba's "Jacob's Ladder" is much the same. The dissent is prosaic and feels obligatory. The performers, like many people in their audience, are protesting gingerly, from a remove, as if this whole anti-war business isn't quite for them. Popular music does attach a high value to newness and originality (or to the perceptions thereof), and protest music is clearly a genre to which today's youth cannot lay fresh claim. It has been done before, and in their parents' time—facts that undermine young

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people's sense of cultural proprietorship and threaten their generational identity.

In every era, popular music is communal, an outlet for the expression of shared interests or feelings, whatever they may be at the time: sitting under the apple tree, saying you want a revolution, getting down tonight. Largely because there is no draft, the Iraq war does not overwhelm the waking thoughts of the student population as Vietnam did several decades ago. (My oldest son and my daughter, who are twenty-one and eighteen, scarcely follow the war news, and I never hear them discussing it with their friends, even though he is studying military history and she, the media.) Iraq exists in a realm outside the sphere of young Americans' direct experience; to focus on it—as music-makers or as listeners—calls for a level of selflessness anathema to the culture of current-day pop, which is absorbed with gratification. The adolescent trifles on the singles charts, much like a great deal of hip-hop, trade mainly in the currency of pleasure. In a day when Bob Dylan is doing commercials for Victoria's Secret, it is a marvel that topical songs are being written and recorded, and that anyone is listening at all.

SEVERAL OF THE MOST FORCEFUL and persuasive recent anti-war songs come from hip-hop artists, specialists in outrage: "Bombs Over Baghdad" by OutKast, the smart, inventive duo of Andre 3000 and Big Boi; "In a World Gone Mad..." by the incisive Beastie Boys; and "Son of a Bush" by Public Enemy in vintage form. A common strength of the harder-edged musics to have emerged since the rise of rock and roll has been their readiness to challenge orthodoxy, be it social, moral, or political. The founding notion of rock—and of early metal, funk, punk, and rap—was its very wrongness in the eyes of the mainstream: it was too sexual, too dumb, too evil, or simply too hard to understand. While this thinking may seem to deny a form such as hip-hop the moral authority to criticize the president or anyone else on grounds of principle, it also gives its statements of indignity all the more power. In his recent HBO special, Chris Rock did a routine about the depravity of some hip-hop lyrics: "Fuck her in the eye! Fuck her in the eye!" he rapped. "Blind the bitch! Blind the bitch!" When folks who take that sort of thing in stride are offended,

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something really nasty must be going on—exactly as it was in Abu Ghraib.

Commercial country and western music, with its outlaw posturing and lyrics that romanticize cheatin' and drinkin' and gamblin', has no greater moral authority than rap, of course, although this has never inhibited country singers from jingoistic chest-thumping. In fact, the jingoistic chest-thumper has been a sub-genre of country music since Merle Haggard retaliated against the hippie movement with "Okie from Muskogee." (Haggard, a sophisticated musician and a keen lyricist, stooped to such defensive pandering only rarely.) Nashville has generated a truckload of new contributions to this milieu since September 11, with hits by Lee Greenwood, Aaron Tippin, Toby Keith, the Warren Brothers, Clint Black (who came up with the best title, "I Raq and I Roll"), and the newcomer Darryl Worley, who made number one on the country charts with "Have You Forgotten?" In it, Worley sings, "I hear people saying we don't need this war/I say there's some things worth fighting for." He has said in interviews that he wrote the song prior to the invasion of Iraq, but the tune earned him an invitation to the White House. Somehow, it seems, someone in the Bush administration conflated the war against terror with the war in Iraq.

Shortly after John Lennon moved to New York in the early 1970s, he entered a deep protest phase and started whipping off topical songs like daily journalism—off-handed diatribes about hot-button events such as the Attica State Prison riot ("Attica State, Attica State/We're all mates with Attica State") and ballads about the radicals John Sinclair and Angela Davis. (He recorded his take on feminism, "Woman Is the Nigger of the World," during this period.) I remember reading in *Rolling Stone* that Lennon had plans to start releasing 45 rpm singles made of cardboard, a kind of musical newsprint. It was a brilliant idea, in that most topical songs are disposable and best forgotten in time. ("Woman Is the Nigger of the World" was issued on vinyl and is still in print on CD, sadly.) Most of the new songs protesting the Iraq war seem unlikely to escape the destiny of their genre.

In the absence of a significant antiwar movement through which the music could be employed, contemporary protest songs have purpose but not function. Pete Seeger used to say, "It's not how good a song is that matters, it's how much good a song does." What good is the most impassioned challenge to the Iraq war on its own, in the face of public indifference? The protest singers of the 1960s acted out of a belief that a song could change the world. Their children have taken note that wars are raging in the same old way. It is "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?" that seems different now. ■

Cynthia Ozick

The Good Cossacks

Tolstoy and genocide.

I.

CONTEMPLATING THE UNpredictable trajectory of Tolstoy's life puts one in mind of those quizzical Max Beerbohm caricatures, wherein an old writer confronts—with perplexity, if not with contempt—his young self. So here is Tolstoy at seventy-two, dressed like a *muzhik* in belted peasant tunic and rough peasant boots, with the long hoary priestly beard of a vagabond pilgrim, traveling third class on a wooden bench in a fetid train carriage crowded with the ragged poor. In the name of the equality of souls he has turned himself into a cobbler; in the name of the pristine Jesus he is estranged from the rites and the beliefs of Russian Orthodoxy; in the name of Christian purity he has abandoned wife and family. He is ascetic, celibate, pacifist. To the multitude of his followers and disciples (Gandhi among them), he is a living saint.

And over here, in the opposite panel, is Tolstoy at twenty-three: a dandy, a horseman, a soldier, a hunter, a tippler, a gambler, a wastrel, a frequenter of fashionable balls, a carouser among gypsies, a seducer of servant girls; an aristocrat immeasurably wealthy, inheritor of a far-flung estate, master of hundreds of serfs. Merely to settle a debt at cards, he thinks nothing of selling (together with livestock and a parcel of land) several scores of serfs.

In caricature, the two—the old Tolstoy, the young Tolstoy—cannot be reconciled. In conscience, in contriteness, they very nearly can. The young Tolstoy's diaries are self-interrogations that lead to merciless self-indictments, pledges of spiritual regeneration, and utopian programs for both personal renewal and the amelioration of society at large. But the youthful reformer is also a consistent backslider. At twenty-six he writes scathingly: "I am ugly, awkward, untidy and socially uncouth. I am irritable and tiresome to others; immodest, intolerant and shy as a child. In other words, a boor.... I am excessive, vacillating, unstable, stupidly vain and aggressive, like all weaklings. I am not courageous. I am so lazy that idleness has become an ineradicable habit with me." After admitting nevertheless to a love of virtue, he confesses: "Yet there is one thing I love more than virtue: fame. I am so ambitious, and this craving in me has had so little satisfaction, that if I had to choose between fame and virtue, I am afraid I would very often opt for the former."

A year later, as an officer stationed at Sebastopol during the Crimean War, he is all at once struck by a "grandiose, stupendous" thought. "I feel capable of devoting my life to it. It is the founding of a new religion, suited to the present state of mankind: the religion of Christ, but divested of faith and mysteries, a practical religion, not promising eternal bliss but providing bliss here on earth. I realize," he acknowledges, "that this idea can only become a reality after several generations have worked consciously toward it," but in the meantime he is still gambling, losing heavily, and complaining of "fits of lust" and "criminal sloth." The idealist is struggling in the body of the libertine; and the libertine is always, at least in the diaries, in pursuit of self-cleansing.

Cynthia Ozick's new novel, HEIR TO THE GLIMMERING WORLD, *will be published by Houghton Mifflin in September.*

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IT WAS IN ONE OF THESE RECURRENT moods of purification in the wake of relapse that Tolstoy determined, in 1851, to go to the Caucasus, an untamed region of mountains, rivers, and steppes. He had deserted his university studies; he was obsessed by cards, sex, illusory infatuation; he was footloose and parentless. His mother had died when he was two, his father seven years later. He had been indulged by adoring elderly aunts, patient tutors, obsequious servants (whom he sometimes had flogged). When the family lands fell to him, he attempted to lighten the bruised and toilsome lives of his serfs; the new threshing machine he ordered failed, and behind his back they called him a madman. Futility and dissatisfaction dogged him.

Once more a catharsis was called for, the hope of a fresh start innocent of salons and balls, in surroundings unspoiled by fashion and indolence, far from the silks and artifice of Moscow and St. Petersburg. Not fragile vows in a diary, but an act of radical displacement. If Rousseau was Tolstoy's inspiration—the philosopher's dream of untutored nature—his brother Nicholas, five years his senior, was his opportunity. Nicholas was an officer at a *stanitsa*, a Cossack outpost, in the Caucasus. Tolstoy joined him there as a zealous cadet. The zeal was for the expectation of military honors, but even more for the exhilaration of seeing Cossack life up close. The Cossacks, like their untrammeled landscape, were known to be wild and free; they stood for the purity of natural man, untainted by the affectations of an overrefined society.

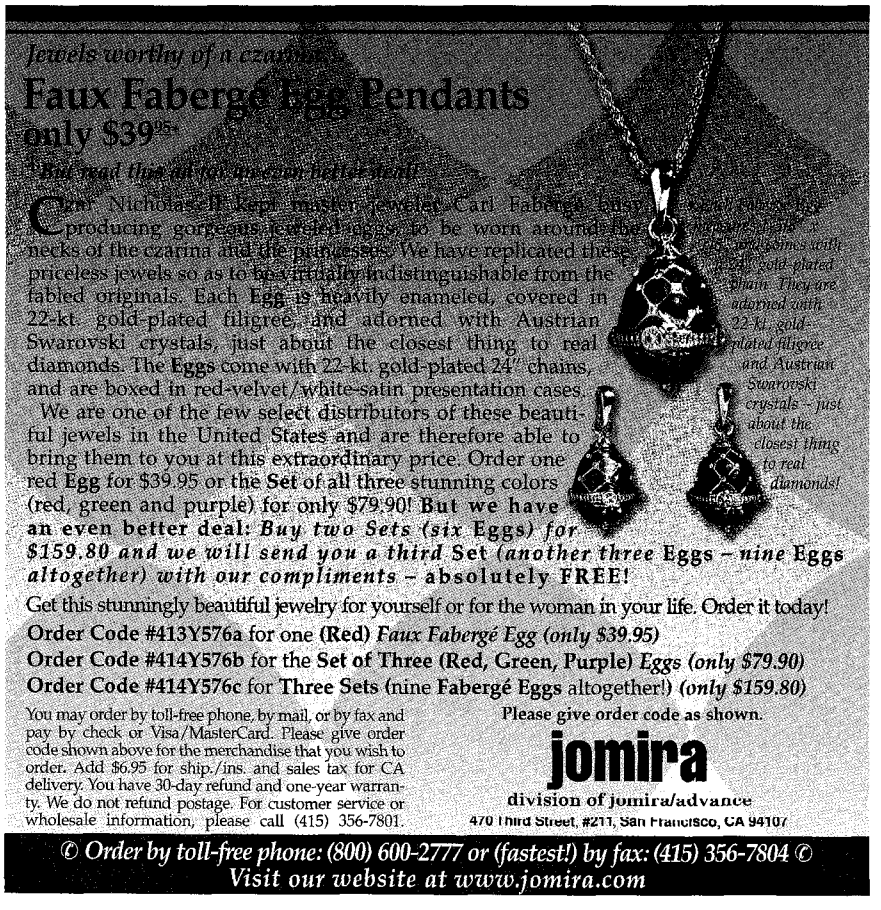
So thinks Olenin, the young aristocrat whose sensibility is the motivating fulcrum of *The Cossacks*, the novel that Tolstoy began to write in 1852, shortly after his arrival in the Caucasus. Like Tolstoy himself, Olenin at eighteen

> had been free as only the rich, parentless young of Russia's eighteen-forties could be. He had neither moral nor physical fetters. He could do anything he wanted.... He gave himself up to all his passions, but only to the extent that they did not bind him.... Now that he was leaving Moscow he was in that happy, youthful state of mind in which a young man, thinking of the mistakes he has committed, suddenly sees things in a different light—sees that these past mistakes were incidental and unimportant, that back then he had not wanted to live a good life, but that now, as he was leaving Moscow, a new life was beginning in which there would be no mistakes and no need for remorse. A life in which there would be nothing but happiness.

But the fictional Olenin is Tolstoy's alter ego only in part. After months of dissipation, each comes to the Caucasus as a volunteer soldier attached to a Russian brigade; each is in search of clarity of heart. Olenin, though, is a wistful outsider who is gradually drawn into the local mores and longs to adopt their ways, while his creator is a sophisticated and psychologically omniscient sympathizer with the eye of an evolving anthropologist.

After starting work on *The Cossacks*, Tolstoy soon set the book aside and did not return to finish it until an entire decade had elapsed. In the interval, he continued to serve in the military for another three years; he published stories and novels; he traveled in Europe; he married. Still, there is little evidence of a hiatus; the narrative of *The Cossacks* is nearly seamless. It pauses only once, of necessity, in chapter four—which, strikingly distanced from character and story, and aiming to explain Cossack culture to the uninitiated, reads much like an entry in a popular encyclopedia. Terrain and villages are minutely noted; also dress, weapons, songs, shops, vineyards, hunting and fishing customs, the status and behavior of girls and women. "At the core of [Cossack] character," Tolstoy writes,

> lies love of freedom, idleness, plunder, and war.... A Cossack bears less hatred for a Chechen warrior who has killed his brother than for a Russian soldier billeted with him.... A dashing young Cossack will flaunt his knowledge of Tatar, and will even speak it with his brother Cossacks when he drinks and carouses with them. And yet this small group of Christians, cast off on a distant corner of the earth, surrounded by Russian soldiers and half-savage Mohammedan tribes, regard themselves as superior, and acknowledge only other Cossacks as their equals.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On and on, passage after descriptive passage, these living sketches of Cossack society accumulate—so much so that a contemporary critic observed, "A score of ethnological articles could not give a more complete, exact, and colorful picture of this part of our land."

II.

THE NAME "COSSACK" APPEARS to derive from a Turkic root meaning freebooter, or, in a milder interpretation, adventurer. As a distinct demographic group, the Cossacks grew out of a movement of peasants escaping serfdom, who in the fifteenth century fled to the rivers and barren plains of Ukraine and southeastern Russia, seeking political autonomy. Having established self-governing units in areas close to Muslim-dominated communities, whose dress and outlook they often assimilated, the Cossacks were eventually integrated into the Russian military; their villages became army outposts defending Russia against the furies of neighboring Chechen fighters. It is into this history—that of an admirable, courageous, independent people, in gaudy Circassian costume, the women as splendidly self-reliant as the men—that Tolstoy sets Olenin, his citified patrician. And it is vital for Tolstoy to halt his story before it has barely begun—momentarily to obliterate it from view—in order to supply his readers in Moscow and St. Petersburg with a geographical and sociological portrait of the land Olenin is about to encounter. For such readers, as for Olenin, the Cossacks are meant to carry the romantic magnetism of the noble primitive.

But there is a different, and far more sinister, strain of Cossack history, which Tolstoy omits, and which later readers—those who have passed through the bloody portals of the twentieth century—cannot evade. Tolstoy saw, and survived, war. We too have seen war; but we have also seen, and multitudes have not survived, genocide. The most savage of wars boasts a cause, or at least a pretext; genocide pretends nothing other than the lust for causeless slaughter. And it is genocide, it must be admitted, that is the ineluctable resonance of the term "Cossacks." Writing one hundred fifty years ago, Tolstoy registers no consciousness of this genocidal association—the long trail of Cossack pogroms and butcheries; hence the Cossacks of his tale are merely conventional warriors. Lukashka, a young fighter, coldly fells a Chechen enemy; his companions vie for possession of the dead man's coat and weapons. Afterward they celebrate with pails of vodka. A flicker of humane recognition touches the killer, but is quickly snuffed: "'He too was a man,' Lukashka said, evidently admiring the dead Chechen." To which a fellow Cossack replies, "Yes, but if it had been up to him, he wouldn't have shown *you* any mercy." It is the language of war, of warriors, heinous enough, and regrettable—still, nothing beyond the commonplace.

THEN IS IT CONCEIVABLE THAT we know more, or wish to know more, than the majestic Tolstoy? Along with Shakespeare and Dante, he stands at the crest of world literature: who can own a deeper sensibility than that of Tolstoy, who can know more than he? But we do know more. Through the grimness of time and the merciless retina of film, we have been witness to indelible scenes of genocide. And it is because of this ineradicable contemporary knowledge of systematic carnage that Cossack history must now, willy-nilly, trigger tremor and alarm.

Fast-forward from Tolstoy's 1850s to 1920: Isaac Babel, a Soviet reporter, is riding with the Red Cossacks, a brigade that has made common cause with the Bolsheviks. They are hoping forcibly to bring Poland to communism. Babel, like Olenin, is a newcomer to the ways of the Cossacks, and he too is entranced by nature's stalwarts. In his secret diary he marvels at these skilled and fearless horsemen astride their thundering mounts: "inexplicable beauty, an awesome force advancing ... red flags, a powerful, well-knit body of men, confident commanders, calm and experienced eyes." And again, describing a nocturnal tableau: "They eat together, sleep together, a splendid silent companionship ... they sing songs that sound like church music in lusty voices, their devotion to horses, beside each man a little heap—saddle, bridle, ornamental saber, greatcoat."

But there is a lethal underside to this muscular idyll. Daily the Cossacks storm into the little Jewish towns of Polish Galicia, looting, burning, torturing, raping, branding, desecrating, murdering. They are out to slaughter every living Jew. Babel, a Jew who will become one of Russia's most renowned writers—and whom the Soviet secret police will finally execute—conceals his identity: no Jew can survive when Cossacks are near. (My own mother, who emigrated from czarist Russia in 1906 at the age of nine, once confided, in a horrified whisper, how a great-uncle, seized in a Cossack raid, was tied by his feet to the tail of a horse; the Cossack galloped off, and the man's head went pounding on cobblestones until the skull was shattered.)

TOLSTOY DID NOT LIVE TO SEE the atrocities of 1920; he died in 1910, and by then he had long been a Christian pacifist. But surely he was aware of other such crimes. The Cossack depredations of the nineteenth century are infamous; yet these, and the mass killings that Babel recorded, hardly weigh at all in comparison with the Chmielnicki massacres that are the bloodiest blot on Cossack history. In a single year, between 1648 and 1649, under the leadership of Bogdan Chmielnicki, Cossacks murdered three hundred thousand Jews, a number not exceeded until the rise of the genocidal Nazi regime.

None of this, it goes without saying, forms the background of Tolstoy's novel. *The Cossacks*, after all, is a kind of love story: its theme is longing. The seventeenth century is buried beyond our reach, and already the events of the middle of the twentieth have begun to recede into forgetfulness. All the same, the syllables of the word "Cossacks" even now retain their fearful death-toll, and a reader of our generation who is not historically naïve, or willfully amnesiac, will not be deaf to their sound.

Tolstoy's stories are above all always humane, and his depiction of his Cossacks is exuberantly individuated and in many ways unexpectedly familiar. They are neither glorified nor demeaned, and they are scarcely the monsters of their collective annals; if they are idiosyncratic, it is only in the sense of the ordinary human article. *The Cossacks* was immediately acclaimed. Turgenev, older than Tolstoy by ten years, wrote rapturously, "I was carried away." Turgenev's colleague, the poet Afanasy Fet, exclaimed, "The ineffable superiority of genius!" and declared *The Cossacks* to be a masterpiece; and so it remains, validated by permanence. Then what are we to do with what we know? How are we to regard Tolstoy, who, though steeped in principles of compassion, turned away from what *he* knew?

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III.

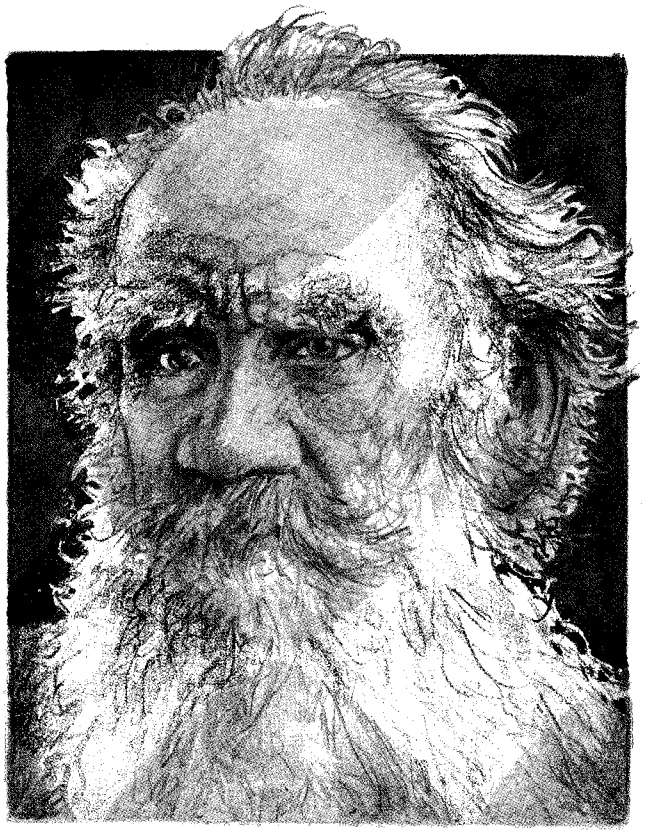
THE ANSWER, I BELIEVE, LIES in another principle, sometimes hard to come by. Not the solipsist credo that isolates literature from the world outside of itself, but the idea of the sovereign integrity of story. Authenticity in fiction depends largely on point of view—so it is not Tolstoy's understanding of the shock of history that must be looked for; it is Olenin's. And it is certain that Olenin's mind is altogether bare of anything that will not stir the attention of a dissolute, rich, and copiously indulged young man who lives, like most young men of his kind, wholly in the present, prone to the prejudices of his class and time. Tolstoy means to wake him up—not to history, not to pity or oppression, but to the sublimeness of the natural world.

So come, reader, and never mind! Set aside the somber claims of history, at least for the duration of this airy novel. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* pays no heed to the Spanish Armada; *Pride and Prejudice* happily ignores the Napoleonic Wars; *The Cossacks* is unstained by old terrors. A bucolic fable is under way, and Olenin will soon succumb to the mountains, the forest, the village, the spirited young men, the bold young women. His first view of the horizon—"the massive mountains, clean and white in their gentle contours, the intricate, distinct line of the peaks and the sky"—captivates him beyond his stale expectations, and far more genuinely than the recent enthusiasms of Moscow: "Bach's music or love, neither of which he believed in."

> All his Moscow memories, the shame and repentance, all his foolish and trivial dreams about the Caucasus, disappeared forever. It was as if a solemn voice told him: "Now it has begun!"... Two Cossacks ride by, their rifles in slings bouncing lightly on their backs, and the brown and gray legs of their horses blur—again the mountains. Across the Terek [river], smoke rises from a village—again the mountains. The sun rises and sparkles on the Terek, shimmering through the weeds—again the mountains. A bullock cart rolls out of a Cossack village, the women are walking, beautiful young women—the mountains.

And almost in an instant Olenin is transformed, at least outwardly. He sheds his formal city clothes for a Circassian coat to which a dagger is strapped, grows a Cossack mustache and beard, and carries a Cossack rifle. Even his complexion alters, from an urban pallor to the ruddiness of clear mountain air. After three months of hard bivouac living, the Russian soldiers come flooding into the village, stinking of tobacco, their presence and possessions forced on unwilling Cossack hosts. Olenin is no ordinary soldier—his servant has accompanied him from Moscow, and he is plainly a gentleman who can pay well for his lodging, so he is quartered in one of the better accommodations, a gabled house with a porch, which belongs to the cornet, a man of self-conscious status: he is a teacher attached to the regiment. To make room for him, the cornet and his family must move into an adjacent thatch-roofed house: Olenin, like every Russian billeted in the village, is an unwelcome encroachment. "You think I need such a plague? A bullet into your bowels!" cries Old Ulitka, the cornet's wife. Maryanka, the daughter, gives him silent, teasing, hostile glances, and Olenin yearns to speak to her: "Her strong, youthful step, the untamed look in the flashing eyes peering over the edge of the white kerchief, and her strong, shapely body struck Olenin. . . . 'She is the one!' he thought." And again:

> He watched with delight how freely and gracefully she leaned forward, her pink smock clinging to her breasts and shapely legs, and how she straightened up, her rising breasts outlined clearly beneath the tight cloth. He watched her slender feet lightly touch the ground in their worn slippers, and her strong arms with rolled-up sleeves thrusting the spade into the dung as if in anger, her deep black eyes glancing at him. Though her delicate eyebrows frowned at times, her eyes expressed pleasure and awareness of their beauty.



Leo Tolstoy by Jack Coughlin for The New Republic

But he cannot approach her. He is solitary, watchful, bemused by everything around him. He sits on his porch, reading, dreaming; alone and lost in the woods, he is overpowered by a spurt of mystical idealism. More and more the abandoned enticements and impressions of Moscow ebb, and more and more he immerses himself in Cossack habits. He befriends a garrulous, grizzled old hunter, Eroshka, a drunkard and a sponger, who teaches him the secrets of the forest and introduces him to chikhir, the local spirits. In and out of his cups, Eroshka is a rough-cut philosopher, ready to be blood brother to all—Tatars, Armenians, Russians. He mocks the priests, and believes that "when you croak, grass will grow over your grave, and that will be that." "There's no sin in anything," he tells Olenin. "It's all a lie!"

And meanwhile Maryanka continues elusive. She is being courted by Lukashka, whom Olenin both admires and en-

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vies. Lukashka is all that Olenin is not—brash, reckless, wild, a fornicator and carouser, fit for action, at one with the life of a fighter. He is a Cossack, and it is a Cossack—not Olenin—that is Maryanka's desire. Even when Olenin is finally and familiarly accepted by Old Ulitka, Maryanka resists. At bottom, *The Cossacks* is an old-fashioned love triangle, as venerable as literature itself; yet it cannot be consummated, on either man's behalf. Maryanka may not have Lukashka—violence destroys him. And she must repudiate Olenin: he is a stranger, and will always remain so. Despite the Circassian coat, despite Eroshka's embraces, despite the merry-making chikhir, he is, unalterably, a Russian gentleman. He will never be a Cossack. In the end Moscow will reclaim him.

But Tolstoy's art has another purpose, apart from the regretful realism of the tale's dénouement and its understated psychological wisdom. It is, in this novel, a young man's art, instinct with ardor—an ardor lacking any tendril of the judgmental. By contrast, the old Tolstoy, at seventy, pledged to religio-political issues of conscience, nevertheless declined to lend his moral weight to a manifesto seeking a reprieve for Alfred Dreyfus, the French Jewish officer falsely accused of treason. Though this was the cause célèbre of the age, Tolstoy was scornful: Dreyfus was hardly a man of the people, he was not a *muzhik*, he was not a pacifist believer. "It would be a strange thing," he insisted, "that we Russians should take up the defense of Dreyfus, an utterly undistinguished man, when so many exceptional ones have been hanged, deported, or imprisoned at home."

His polemical engines charged instead into a campaign on behalf of the Dukhobors, an ascetic communal sect that refused to bear arms and, like Tolstoy, preached non-resistance to evil. A brutal initiative urged by the czar had exiled the group to the Caucasus, where at the government's behest bands of Cossack horsemen surrounded the sectarians, whipped and maimed them, and pillaged their houses. Tolstoy was outraged, and in a letter to the czar protested that such religious persecutions were "the shame of Russia." That among the agents of persecution were the selfsame Cossack daredevils about whom he had written so enchantingly forty years before will perhaps not escape notice.

And again: never mind! The young Tolstoy is here possessed less by social commitment than by the sensory. His visionary lyricism exults in Maryanka's strong legs, and in the mountains, woods, and sparkling rivers of the Caucasus. The Caucasus is his motive and his message. Natural beauty is his lure. Tolstoy's supremacy in capturing heat, weather, dust, the thick odors of the vineyard, culminates in a voluptuous passage:

> The villagers were swarming over the melon fields and over the vineyards that lay in the stifling shade, clusters of ripe black grapes shimmering among broad translucent leaves. Creaking carts heaped high with grapes made their way along the road leading from the vineyards, and grapes crushed by the wheels lay everywhere in the dust. Little boys and girls, their arms and mouths filled with grapes and their shirts stained with grape juice, ran after their mothers. Tattered laborers carried filled baskets on powerful shoulders. Village girls, kerchiefs wound tightly across their faces, drove bullocks harnessed to local carts. Soldiers by the roadside asked for grapes, and the women climbed into the rolling carts and threw bunches down, the men holding out their shirt flaps to catch them. In some courtyards the grapes were already being pressed, and the aroma of grape-skin leavings filled the air.... Laughter, song, and the happy voices of women came from within a sea of shadowy green vines, through which their smocks and kerchiefs peeked.

The scene is Edenic, bursting with fecundity, almost biblical in its overflowingness. Scents and juices spill out of every phrase: it is Tolstoy's sensuous genius at its ripest. Olenin will return to Moscow, yes; but his eyes have been dyed by the grape harvest, and he will never again see as he once saw, before the Caucasus, before Maryanka, before the mountains. The novel's hero is the primordial earth itself, civilization's dream of the pastoral. The old Tolstoy—that crabbed puritanical sermonizing septuagenarian who wrote *What Is Art?*, a tract condemning the pleasures of the senses—might wish to excoriate the twentysomething author of *The Cossacks*. The old Tolstoy is the apostle of renunciation. But the young Tolstoy, who opens Olenin to the intoxications of the natural world, and to the longings of love, means to become, at least for a time, an apostle of desire. ■

Cass R. Sunstein

Mobbed Up

The Wisdom of Crowds: Why the Many Are Smarter Than the Few and How Collective Wisdom Shapes Business, Economies, Societies, and Nations
By James Surowiecki
(Doubleday, 296 pp., $24.95)

In the summer of 2003, analysts at the Department of Defense had an unusual idea. To predict important events in the world, including terrorist attacks, they would create a kind of market in which ordinary people could actually place bets. The proposed Policy Analysis Market would allow each of us to invest in our predictions about such matters as the growth of the Egyptian economy, the death of Yasir Arafat, and the likelihood of terrorist attacks in the United States. Investors would win or lose money on the basis of the accuracy of their predictions. Predictably, the Policy Analysis Market produced a storm of criticism. Ridiculed as "offensive" and "useless," the proposal was abandoned.

Amid the war on terrorism, why was the Defense Department so interested in the Policy Analysis Market? The answer is simple: it wanted to have some help in predicting geopolitical events, including those that would endanger American interests, and it believed that a market would provide that help. It speculated that if a large number of people could be given an incentive to aggregate their pri-

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Arabian Fables (II)

More fanciful Arab myths to sway world opinion.

Earlier this year, we published our message, "Arabian Fables (I)," in which we made clear how the Arab propaganda machine creates myths and lies with which to misinform the world. We discussed the myths of the "Palestinians"and of the "West Bank" and the mythical concept of "occupied territories". In today's message, we shall address three more of these myths.

What are some of these myths?

Jerusalem ("Arab East Jerusalem"). The Arabs have assiduously propagated the myths that Jerusalem is an Arab capital, that (after Mecca and Medina) Jerusalem is their third holy city, and that it is intolerable to them that infidels (Jews) are in possession of it.

The reality of course is that Jerusalem was never an Arab capital and that it was, until the Jews revitalized it, a dusty provincial city that hardly played any economic, social, or political role. Jerusalem is mentioned hundreds of times in the Jewish Bible and has been the center of the Jewish faith and the focus of Jewish longing ever since the Romans destroyed the Temple in the early years of the first millennium. Not once is Jerusalem mentioned in the Koran.

As to "East Jerusalem": There is East Saint Louis, there is East Hampton, and there used to be East Berlin, but, until the Arab propaganda machine created the concept, there was never in history an "East Jerusalem", let alone an "Arab East Jerusalem".

> "The Arab propaganda machine has created myths that have been accepted by much of the world. No peace in the Middle East is possible until those Arab myths have been exposed for what they are!"

The eastern part of Jerusalem is now predominantly inhabited by Arabs, though their proportion is decreasing. But what is the reason for this? It is because the Jordanians destroyed all traces of Jewish presence from the eastern part of the city and drove all the Jews out during the 19 years (between 1948 and 1967) in which they were in occupation of the eastern part of the city. The world, informed by Arab propaganda, considers those Jews who wish to return to the eastern part of the city to be troublemakers or worse.

The concept of Jerusalem being a holy Arab city and the capital of whatever political entity the "Palestinians" may eventually form is a myth and so of course is the concept of "Arab East Jerusalem".

"Settlements." When Jordan came into possession of Judea/Samaria and the eastern part of Jerusalem, following the invasion of the newly-formed Jewish state, and stayed in occupation for 19 years, it systematically obliterated all Jewish villages in the area under their occupation, drove out the Jewish inhabitants, and left the area "judenrein" (free of Jews)—the first time that concept had been applied since the Nazis created it during their short and bloody reign in Germany. When the Israelis recovered these territories, they rebuilt these villages, created new ones, and built new towns and suburbs to existing cities, especially Jerusalem.

The Arabs decided to call these towns and villages "settlements", with their connotation of illegitimacy and impermanence. The world, including the United States, is much agitated over these population centers and, goaded by the Arabs, declares them to be impediments to peace. What nonsense! Nobody considers the tens of thousands of Arabs who continue to stream to these territories as impediments to peace.

The term "settlements", too, is a propaganda myth created by the Arabs.

"Refugees." In 1948, when six Arab armies invaded the Jewish state in order to destroy it on the very day of its birth, broadcasts by the advancing Arab armies appealed to the resident Arabs to leave their homes so as not to be in the way of the invaders. As soon as the "quick victory" was won, they could return to their homes and would also enjoy the loot from the Jews, who would have been driven into the sea. It didn't turn out quite that way. Those Arabs who, despite the urgings of the Jews to stay and to remain calm, foolishly left, became refugees. Those who decided not to yield to those blandishments are now, and have been for over 50 years, citizens of Israel, with all the same rights and privileges as their Jewish fellows.

But what happened to those refugees—by best estimates about 600,000 of them? Did their "Arab brethren" allow them to settle in their countries, to work, and to become productive citizens and useful members of their societies? No! They kept and still keep them, their children, their grandchildren, and in some cases even their great-grandchildren, in miserable "refugee camps", so that they can be used as political and military pawns in order to keep the burning hatred against Israel alive and in order to supply the manpower for the unremitting fight against Israel.

During those more than fifty years, Israel has taken in more than three million Jewish immigrants from all parts of the world and has integrated them productively into its society. According to the "Palestinians", the Arab "refugees" have now marvelously increased to five million (!). It is the intent and fervent desire of the Arabs that all of them should return to Israel so as to destroy the country without the necessity of war.

The "refugees" are a red herring and another myth created by the Arab propaganda machine.

The Arab propaganda machine, aided by the most high-powered public relations firms in the United States and all over, has created myths that, by dint of constant repetition, have been accepted as truth by much of the world. No sensible discussion, no peace in the Middle East, is possible until those Arab myths have been exposed for what they are.

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vate information, in the way that the Policy Analysis Market would do, government officials would learn a great deal.

Does this idea seem ludicrous? Since 1988, the University of Iowa has run the Iowa Electronic Markets, which allow people to bet on the outcome of presidential elections. As a predictor, the Iowa Electronic Markets have produced extraordinarily accurate judgments, often doing better than professional polling organizations. In the week before each of the last four elections, the predictions in the Iowa market have shown an average absolute error of just 1.5 percentage points, a significant improvement over the 2.1 percentage point error in the final Gallup Polls. Or consider the Hollywood Stock Exchange, in which people predict Oscar nominees and winners, as well as opening weekend box-office successes. Here, too, the level of accuracy has been exceptionally impressive, with (for example) correct predictions of thirty-five out of forty Oscar nominees in 2002.

In fact, prediction markets are springing up all over the Internet, allowing people to make bets on the likely outcomes of sports, entertainment, finance, and political events. On tradesports.com, people have been betting on whether Donald Rumsfeld will resign soon (extremely unlikely), whether Osama bin Laden will be captured by June 2004 (extremely unlikely), whether John Edwards will be selected as John Kerry's running mate (a good chance, but probably not), and whether George W. Bush will be re-elected (more likely than not). One can imagine prediction markets on any number of questions: Will gas prices reach $3 per gallon? Will cellular life be found on Mars? Will smallpox return to the United States? Will there be a sequel to *Master and Commander*? Will the Federal Communications Commission be abolished? (I didn't make these up; they are actual or proposed questions on existing markets.)

JAMES SUROWIECKI IS FASCINATED by prediction markets. In his opinion, they demonstrate that crowds are often wise. He rejects the widespread view that groups of ordinary people are usually wrong—and that we do better to ignore them and follow experts instead. Even when individuals blunder, he believes, groups can excel: "Under the right circumstances, groups are remarkably intelligent, and are often smarter than the smartest people in them." This is so even when "most of the people within the group are not especially well-informed or rational." What is wonderful, and surprising, is that "when our imperfect judgments are aggregated in the right way, our collective intelligence is often excellent." Instead of chasing experts, we should consult that collective intelligence.

As an example, Surowiecki points to the television game show *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?*, on which contestants, if stumped, are permitted either to consult the studio audience or to place a call to a trusted friend or family member (selected in advance precisely because of his or her knowledge and intelligence). As it happens, the trusted allies perform well, producing correct answers 65 percent of the time. But the studio audience performs much better, picking right answers a remarkable 91 percent of the time. Surowiecki also invokes an astonishing finding by the British scientist Francis Galton, who tried to draw lessons about collective intelligence by examining a competition in which contestants guessed the weight of a fat ox at a regional fair in England. The ox weighed 1,198 pounds; the average guess, from the 787 contestants, was 1,197 pounds. Or consider Google, the astonishingly successful Internet search engine. Why does Google work so well? Surowiecki contends that its technology "is built on the wisdom of crowds." The company's founders, Sergey Brin and Lawrence Page, explain that the system "capitalizes on the uniquely democratic character of the Web." Google is good at telling you which site you are likely to want for one reason: it uses the collective "votes" of many other people.

SUROWIECKI IS CONCERNED WITH how crowds can solve three kinds of problems. The first are cognitive. These are factual questions with definite solutions, identifiable now or in the future. Who will win the World Series? How far from the Sun is the Earth? Will a certain surgery be successful? A second set of problems involve coordination. Individuals often need to select a shared course of action—driving on the same side of the road or meeting at a certain place. A third set involve cooperation. If people follow their self-interest, they might fail to cooperate with one another, and hence they will lose their opportunities for mutual advantage. Surowiecki contends that groups of people show far more cooperation than we might predict.

Surowiecki does not make the implausible suggestion that all crowds are wise. To qualify as such, a crowd needs to satisfy three conditions. It must be diverse; its members must be independent; and it must have a "particular kind of decentralization." Each of these conditions is designed to ensure what most interests Surowiecki, which is the emergence and the aggregation of information that group members have. Diversity is important simply to ensure that the group has a lot of information. If a crowd consists of nearly identical people, it is unlikely to be wise, because the group will not know more than the individuals of whom it is composed. Independence is necessary to ensure that people say what they know rather than hide it. Surowiecki is alert to the fact that groups often go wrong if members simply follow one another without pooling individually held information. Hence he notes, correctly, that organizations often do best if each individual behaves independently and does not pay a great deal of attention to the acts and the statements of others. "The smartest groups," he writes, "are made up of people with diverse perspectives who are able to stay independent of each other." The worst-performing investment clubs in the United States consist of people who like one another, socialize together, and show a great deal of consensus. The best performers consist of people who do not see each other much and welcome dissent.

In calling for independence, Surowiecki emphasizes the serious risks associated with "information cascades," which occur when people neglect what they know and pay attention instead to the signals given by others. (In social science, such cascades have been found to arise not only among ordinary people choosing restaurants, sneakers, and political candidates, but also among doctors making diagnoses and even federal judges deciding cases.) The problem with information cascades is that group members are likely to do far worse than they would if everyone disclosed his or her private information. By pointing to the dangers of bad cascades, Surowiecki signals the importance of starting with a "wide array of options and information" and of having at least a few people who are willing "to put their own judgment ahead of the group's, even when it's not sensible to do so." Much of the time, Surowiecki writes, groups do best if their

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members pay little "attention to what everyone else is saying."

WHAT ABOUT DECENTRALIZATION? Of Surowiecki's three conditions, this is the least intuitive. He attempts to clarify it by focusing on the war against terrorism. To wage that war successfully, of course, a great deal of information must be assembled. Surowiecki is critical of the widespread idea that what is needed is more centralization. Good solutions are far more likely to follow, he argues, "if you set a crowd of self-interested, independent people to work in a decentralized way on the same problem." Surowiecki seeks processes in which independent people, all armed with their own knowledge, are able to attend to problems "while also being able to aggregate that local knowledge and private information into a collective whole." The Iraq war is Surowiecki's example. Local American commanders had considerable latitude to act on their own, but they were also able to communicate rapidly, thus allowing successful overall strategies to develop from a multitude of local judgments. Surowiecki concludes that successful wars "may depend as much on the fast aggregation of information from the field as on preexisting, top-down strategies." (The problems that have arisen since the end of formal hostilities raise obvious difficulties for Surowiecki's claims; perhaps information on the ground is not being properly aggregated, or perhaps American officials don't have enough information on the ground to stop continuing attacks.) For intelligence relating to terrorism, Surowiecki argues that what is needed is aggregation, not centralization. And here Surowiecki returns to the ill-fated and roundly condemned Policy Analysis Market, suggesting that it "was potentially a very good idea."

Surowiecki is also fascinated by the very different phenomenon of social coordination. He points to the behavior of pedestrians on streets and sidewalks, where individuals are able to coordinate their movement so as not to bump into one another. Surowiecki pays tribute to "the beauty of a well-coordinated crowd, in which lots of small, subtle adjustments in pace and stride and direction add up to a relatively smooth and efficient flow," as people "are constantly anticipating each other's behavior." He thinks that pedestrian behavior helps to explain a great deal about the human ability to understand and to follow norms or conventions that other people follow at the same time.

Consider a little experiment by Thomas Schelling, who put the following puzzle to law students at Yale in 1958: You are going to meet someone in New York City. You do not know when or where, and you are unable to talk to the other person ahead of time. What time and place do you choose? Almost all the students said that they would meet at noon, and more than half said that they would meet at the information booth at Grand Central Station. As a more practical example, consider the universally accepted rule of first-come, first-served seating in buses, subways, and movie theaters. In Surowiecki's account, people are extremely good at generating conventions by which they organize their relationships.

Solutions to coordination problems are stable; once we hit upon a shared approach, we are likely to stick to it. Unfortunately, social cooperation is much more fragile, simply because each cooperator has an incentive to defect. Suppose that everyone in a certain community thinks that the community will be better off if people engage in a recycling program. Even if everyone agrees, some people will refuse to participate, thinking that for them as individuals the costs of recycling exceed the benefits, even if the reverse is true for the group as a whole. Self-interested human beings try to "free ride" on the cooperation of others. And positing that people are self-interested, many economists expect cooperation to be rare. What interests Surowiecki is that cooperation is not rare at all. He emphasizes the enormous importance of reciprocity to human endeavors. Usually people will participate in a cooperative endeavor as long as they believe that other people are doing so too. Borrowing a claim by the political scientist Margaret Levi, Surowiecki concludes that people are "contingent cooperators." Most people don't want to be selfish jerks, but they also don't want to be dupes or fools. They will contribute to the common good if they believe that this is the general practice.

SUROWIECKI USES THESE POINTS to explore a wide range of social phenomena, including scientific collaboration, stock prices, and corporate performance. One of his most interesting discussions involves the *Columbia* disaster and less-than-wise group deliberations at NASA. In Surowiecki's account, NASA emphasized consensus over dissent, and so it failed to take advantage of the information held by its engineers, who were perfectly aware of the underlying uncertainties. Stressing "the utter absence of debate and minority findings" in pre-launch discussions about the *Columbia*, Surowiecki argues for the need to counteract the risks associated with "group polarization." When group polarization occurs, people engaged in deliberation with one another end up thinking a more extreme version of what they thought before they started to talk. For example, those who believe that global warming is a serious problem are likely, as a result of internal discussions, to come to believe that global warming is an extremely serious problem; people who think that the Department of Justice is compromising civil liberties are likely to think, after they talk with one another, that the Department of Justice has no respect for civil liberties at all. So too officials at NASA, thinking that space shuttles are essentially safe, might well end up believing that safety is not a problem—even if several of them have private information suggesting otherwise.

Surowiecki knows that the phenomenon of group polarization raises problems for his thesis. If group members predictably end up thinking a more extreme version of what they thought before, what makes them likely to be wise? His answer is that groups need to contain safeguards to ensure that individual judgments are genuinely independent. NASA would have done far better if it had promoted a diversity of opinions and asked people to say what they really thought, rather than allowing internal pressures to lead people to squelch their

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doubts. The lesson here extends to many private and public institutions.

Surowiecki is aware that his celebration of wise crowds has implications for democracy. In light of his general argument, Surowiecki is suspicious of rule by a "technocratic elite," insisting that insulated officials lack the information to produce good decisions. But he does not think that democracies are really solving cognition problems; that's not their business. The reason is that unlike in cases involving simple facts, we "have no standard that allows us to judge a political decision to be 'right' or 'wrong.' " For all the public talk about the "common good," that idea is too disputed to provide objective solutions to political disputes. Surowiecki concludes that democracy should be seen as a way not to produce correct answers to particular questions, but to deal with "the most fundamental problems of cooperation and coordination: How do we live together? How can living together work to our mutual benefit?" On that count, democracy has crucial advantages.

THE PERFORMANCE OF GROUPS is a wonderful subject, and Surowiecki has a remarkable eye for the telling anecdote, illustrating abstract claims with vivid examples. His central point is convincing. Groups, and even crowds, can be wiser than most and sometimes even all of their members, at least if they aggregate information. But there is a serious problem with Surowiecki's discussion: he does not provide an adequate account of the circumstances that make crowds wise or stupid. Note first that the "conditions" that he identifies (diversity, independence, and decentralization) are neither necessary nor sufficient for the wisdom of crowds. On his own analysis, those are the conditions for the solution of problems of cognition, not problems of coordination or cooperation. People do not have to be diverse, or independent, to choose Grand Central Station as a meeting place in New York. If we want people to coordinate or to cooperate, it might well be best if they are similar and if they follow one another. To solve Surowiecki's three kinds of problems, quite different conditions come into play. In any case, coordination and cooperation problems don't come in neat boxes; life turns up all sorts of mixtures (consider marriage) that Surowiecki neglects.

Wild Hog in the Cemetery

Hill of stubble in moonlight, the hog
bristles across the lawn,
eats whole bouquets, eats bouquets whole,
plowing tusk through silk rose and fresh lily.

Our headstones surrender their salt.
Wilder animals would not perturb us.
Worse hogs will cross and sand

down names. This one, at least, grunts life.
He would eat hog, could he make one die.

ED SKOOG

Even for cognition problems, some groups sometimes perform best if their members are not independent and if they listen closely to one another. Groups can benefit when error-prone people silence themselves and follow the views expressed by their most sensible members. If the group contains authorities on the question at hand, members ought to listen closely—and possibly to shut up. Diversity is usually good, above all because it allows groups to acquire more information. But what is needed is not diversity as such, but diversity of the right kind. NASA's judgment would not have been improved if the relevant officials had included members of the Flat Earth Society, or people who believed that aliens are among us or that space flight is simply impossible.

All of these points suggest that the key question is how much information is held by various group members. Most generally, groups are wise only if their members actually know something about the relevant questions. Suppose that the studio audience in *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* were asked not about popular culture but instead about the number of decisions made by the Supreme Court every year. Is there any reason to expect that the majority or even the plurality would be right? Galton's crowd was good at judging the weight of a fat ox. But if its members were asked about the number of atoms in that ox, the median guess wouldn't be very reliable. (To have a reliable average response, the answers have to be better than random, and there cannot be a systematic bias in one or another direction.) Or imagine that a group of law professors is making decisions about how to build a space shuttle. They are unlikely to decide well, simply because law professors tend to know nothing about space shuttles. (I undertook a little experiment, asking law professors to guess the weight of the fuel used on a space shuttle; the right answer is 4.6 million pounds, and I won't embarrass my colleagues by announcing their answers, except to say that the average was way off.)

Surowiecki thinks that the "simplest way to get reliably good answers is just to ask the group each time." Judging the numbers of beans in a jar, groups almost always outperform most of their individual members. (Try it and you'll see.) Asking two hundred students to rank items by weight, one experimenter found that the group's estimate was 94 percent accurate—a figure excelled by only five individuals in that group. But it doesn't follow that groups will always, or generally, produce good answers. Everything depends on what the relevant people know. If you ask a group of randomly selected people about how to perform heart surgery, you will probably do better than if you asked a randomly selected individual; but you would do better still if you asked someone who actually knew how to perform heart surgery. Surowiecki loads the dice by pointing to areas in which good answers come from properly aggregating information that is held by many. In many areas, it is far more sensible to consult specialists.

The uses and the limits of Surowiecki's argument are helpfully approached via the Condorcet Jury Theorem, a significant omission from Surowiecki's presentation. Suppose that people are answering a common question with two possible answers, one false and one true, and that the average probability that each voter will answer correctly exceeds 50 percent. The Condorcet Jury Theorem holds that if each member of the group is answering independently, the probability of a correct answer, by a majority of the group, increases toward certainty as the size of the group increases. The theorem is based on some simple arithmetic, the details of which are irrelevant here. Its importance lies in the demonstration that groups are likely to do better than individuals, and large groups better than small ones, if majority rule is used and if each person is more likely than not to be correct. The crucial proviso is the last one. If each person is more likely than

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not to err, then the theorem's prediction is reversed: the probability of a correct answer, by a majority of the group, decreases toward zero as the size of the group increases! It follows that groups are error-prone if most of their members are likely to blunder.

Surowiecki might object that some crowds can be wise even when ignorance is widespread. Consider the astonishing accuracy of the Iowa Electronic Markets (and other prediction markets), in which good judgments come from groups of investors that include many people who know little and are perhaps more likely to be wrong than to be right. But we cannot easily generalize from prediction markets, because they have several distinctive features. Most important, they do not simply rely on the median or average judgment of a randomly selected group of people. They are genuine markets, in which people voluntarily choose to participate, presumably because they think they know something. In addition, people are permitted to buy and to sell shares on a continuing basis. In these circumstances, accurate answers can emerge even if only a small percentage of participants have good information.

In the Iowa Electronic Markets, it turns out that 85 percent of the traders aren't so smart. They hold onto their shares for a long period and then just accept someone else's prices. The market's predictions appear to be driven by the other 15 percent—frequent traders who post their offers rather than accepting those made by other people. The broader point is that to work well, prediction markets do not require accurate judgments by anything like the majority of participants. In this sense, prediction markets are very different from judgments by ordinary crowds. Surowiecki's claims about group wisdom don't adequately emphasize the unique characteristics of these markets.

SUROWIECKI MIGHT HAVE BEEN expected to celebrate the cognitive virtues of democratic judgments—to suggest that a system that allows a voice for heterogeneous people and that encourages dissent is likely to come to sensible decisions, simply because it heeds the wisdom of the crowd. If 51 percent of voters support George W. Bush, maybe we have reason to think that they are right. But Surowiecki does not make this argument. As I have said, he insists that in the democratic domain we lack standards permitting us to distinguish decisions that are right from those that are wrong. But political decisions depend crucially on predictions. Will large deficits significantly increase interest rates? Will pre-emptive wars increase or decrease the threat of terrorist attacks? Will tax cuts spur economic growth? Problems of cognition are absolutely central to democratic governance. Of course democratic judgments often involve disputed judgments of value, for which demonstrably objective evidence is hard to find. Are pre-emptive wars just? Is economic growth more important than generous social safety nets? Still, in many matters government's performance is improved, or undermined, because of how it deals with cognition problems, and Surowiecki does not acknowledge this.

Return here to NASA, whose failures have been partly a product of a culture that disfavors dissent. In fact, group polarization is a pervasive problem in government circles, where like-minded officials often end up holding a more extreme version of the view with which they began. Surowiecki offers the example of the Bay of Pigs disaster, in which President Kennedy's advisers squelched their private doubts and developed unjustified enthusiasm for a ludicrous invasion plan predicated on the absurd thought that twelve hundred people could unseat Castro and take over Cuba. Is it too speculative to suggest that the current problems in Iraq are partly a product of group polarization within the executive branch—and that those problems could have been anticipated if the White House had had a better process for aggregating privately held information?

Franklin Delano Roosevelt's famously disorganized and much-criticized White House, with confusing lines of authority and multiple people working on similar tasks, was ideally suited to the production of a wide range of views and information. In this light, Surowiecki's dismissal of the idea that sometimes democracy faces cognition problems prevents him from exploring, or even seeing, some possible lessons for how to structure democratic institutions. In war and in peace, such institutions could take much more aggressive steps to elicit and to use existing information, above all by creating mechanisms to aggregate what people know. ■

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Art Offensive

"EVENTS" IN WASHINGTON, by which I mean public discussions of public subjects, are, even on a quiet week, abundant. They vary in prestige, according to the quality of the expert panel, the urgency of the issue to be discussed, and the availability of food. I have attended many such gatherings in my two years in Washington, due to my employment first at a think tank (think tanks forming the backbone of event society) and then at this magazine. Owing to this broad experience, when I heard the clinking of bottles and ice as I approached the ballroom where this year's Jefferson Lecture was to be held, I deduced that wine might be served, ranking this particular event, on the hierarchy of a freeloader's hedonism, with those hosted by the Council on Foreign Relations (the evening receptions) and some of the ritzier European institutes.

ASIDE FROM THE POSSIBILITY OF WINE, the Jefferson Lecture—established by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) in 1972—seemed at first like any other Washington event. It quickly became clear, however, that this was not your average Washington meet-and-greet. The first clue was the peppy marching-band music that wafted through the cavernous ballroom. My companion and I assured ourselves that the music was canned, a method of keeping the audience of easily distracted humanists on pace toward its seats. Then we saw a cluster of red uniforms beside the podium and realized that the marching band was live, growing louder with each step. It was, in fact, the President's Own United States Marine Band, playing for Harvard Professor Helen Vendler, the esteemed scholar and critic of poetry who was this year's lecturer.

STRANGE THOUGH THE MARINE BAND seemed—the band plays at precious few Washington events, let alone scholarly ones—its presence set the tone for the evening. The NEH mandates that the Jefferson Lecture serve as "the highest honor the federal government bestows for distinguished intellectual and public achievement in the humanities." The audience rose for the presentation of the color guard and sang the national anthem, while a JumboTron displayed a close-up, first of the flag, and then of Vendler's thoughtful face. The pomp underscored the extent to which the Jefferson Lecture was to serve as a bridge, uniting disparate things with disparate goals, the scholar and the state.

THE JEFFERSON LECTURE IS A VERY public affair, but it has little to do with public intellectual life in Washington. The lecture is to be delivered by a humanist of the highest caliber—which, almost by definition, means a scholar who lives intellectually and most likely physically outside Washington. It is not that Washington suffers from a lack of serious thinkers or of people who consider themselves such. But Washington is not a city of arts and letters—it is a company town. It houses enough museums and theaters to entertain its workers in the off hours. But the city's universities are known less for English departments than for well-endowed schools of public affairs.

THE NEH HAS STRUGGLED IN THE PAST to balance the demands of contemporary relevance with the narrow precision of scholarly achievement. "No matter how visible the lecturer is," William R. Ferris complained in 1999, when he was chairman of the NEH, "very few Americans have heard of the Jefferson Lecture." Ferris attempted to rectify matters by inviting an extremely well-known man to deliver the following year's lecture, one who was also his boss: President Bill Clinton. (Clinton's opus was not sufficiently scholarly for the tastes of anyone beyond the NEH board, and the uproar that ensued forced the White House to demur.) Nor have the lectures always succeeded in their public mission. These pages noted in 1994 Gwendolyn Brooks's regrettable observations on the likeability of Jews and the merits of single-parent homes. In 2001, Arthur Miller delivered a frustratingly incoherent talk on theater as a presidential activity. And, even when the lecture is enjoyable, there has often remained a tension between the popular context and the scholarly oeuvre. The humanists either defensively insist on the importance of their work while ruefully acknowledging, in Miller's words, that the "release of art will not forge a cannon or pave a street," or, conversely, they defend themselves against scholars dismissive of their mass appeal. After David McCullough was lauded in the introduction to his 2003 lecture as having achieved "the secret dream of every historian: [having] his books ... sold in airports," the popular American historian felt it necessary, as if his life's work was not already testament enough, to remind that "no harm is done to history by making it something someone would want to read."

WHAT MADE HELEN VENDLER'S lecture, soon to be published in these pages, so remarkable was its diffusion of this central tension by a judicious disregard for it. Vendler simply assumed our need for the humanities and contended something more radical instead: that the arts, not history or philosophy, should be the humanities' main concern. Even more, Vendler suggested that the arts "have a right, within our schools, to be as serious an object of study as microbiology or mathematics." In her conception, the humanities are important not just because they are useful—a revolutionary premise in a city where "history" frequently masquerades as "case study" and philosophers can be broken into two camps, the realists and the utopians, both operating out of the Pentagon—and the genres of humanities commonly viewed as most peripheral to the exigencies of daily life are, instead, the most central.

VENDLER'S INTERPRETATION OF THE task before her in the Jefferson Lecture signified a pointed and welcome rebuke to the speakers of recent years, one that bodes well for the future of this Washington event. She did not attempt to fit her study of arts and literature into a rubric of utilitarian good—rather, her idea of utilitarian good was one built on the necessity of scholarship before or alongside everything else. Vendler was able to make her argument, perhaps, precisely because she lays no claim to the "public intellectual" status of Brooks or Miller or McCullough. She was a private intellectual making a public speech. And, not least for this reason, listening to her was a capital thrill.

ANNE O'DONNELL

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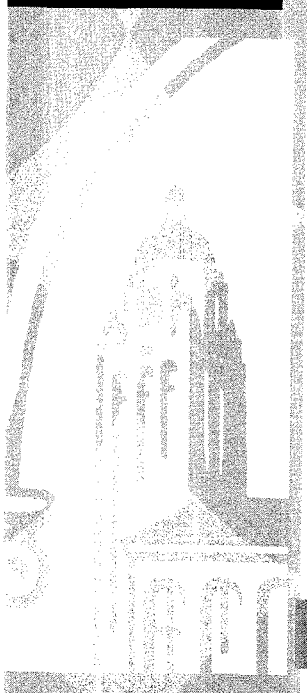

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—Larry Diamond

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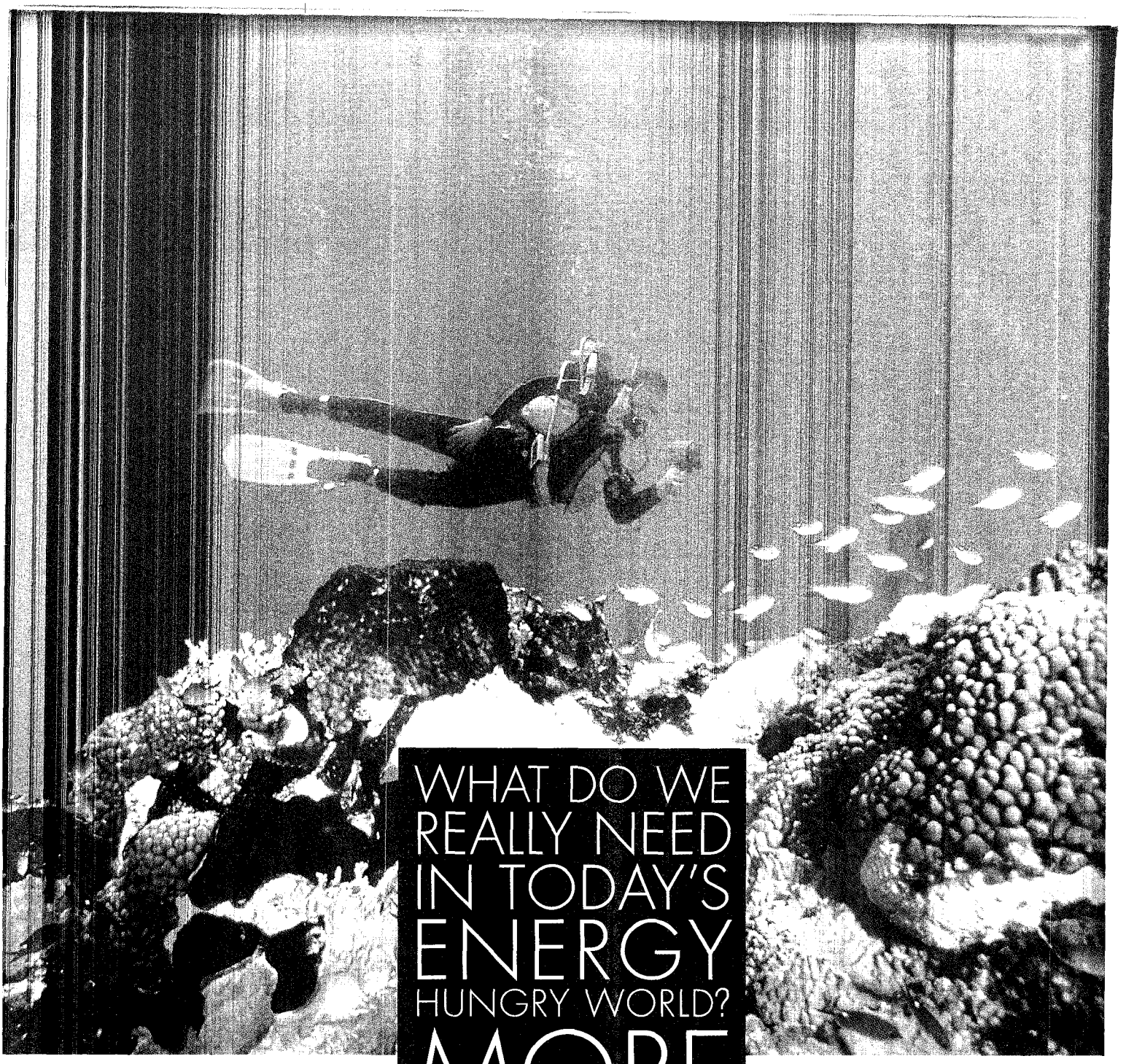

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